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Life After Grief: Spiritual Growth Through Loss

by

Casey Patricia Chaulk ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and
Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Education

in

Counselling Psychology

Department of Educational Psychology

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1995

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ABSTRACT

Grief is undoubtedly a painful experience. Is it sometimes a growthful experience? If so, what is the nature of this experience? Does it sometimes access dimensions of the human person we call spiritual? If so, how does this developmental process unfold? These are the questions this project was intended to address.

The study initially explored the concepts of grief and spirituality. Personal experience was introduced by way of semi-structured interviews with four individuals, male and female, who, having experienced major grief, now attribute spiritual development to these painful experiences.

Five main themes emerged from an analysis of the interviews. The first, "Mystery", revealed an awareness of the wonder of life and death. Second, grief was seen as an opportunity, a gift, where positive results were taken from the experience, especially for one's spiritual growth. Third, grief was described as having been a form of personal test, where one faces seemingly impossible tasks. The fourth theme involved a differentiation between religion and spirituality, where religion is about a belief system, and spirituality is about an integration of experience with meaning. And finally, the fifth theme revealed a new awareness of the feminine side of God and the self.

The findings of this study may be useful to counsellors and therapists.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

> Here's the thing, say Shug. The thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. And sometimes it just manifest itself even if you not looking, or don't know what you looking for. Trouble do it for most folks, I think. (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 1982, p. 202.)

My work as a therapist has repeatedly shown me that spirituality is an essential aspect of healing and personal growth. Aside from enriching our lives, our spiritual beliefs play a key role in how we confront the challenges that we face in life. I believe that this concept constitutes the backbone of humanity, of existence for us all, whether we are aware of it or not.

Indeed, why would people be so interested in spirituality throughout the history of humanity, if that core we call the spirit were not a constant? Like a breeze we know spirituality not by direct sight of it but by its noticeable effects.

I have realized, though, that in order to venture into spirituality, there are several facets therein which must be addressed. One of these is definition; I have, therefore, explored some of the definitions and descriptions others have given, and looked for shared threads of meaning.

A thorough look at the meaning of spirituality, however, is not complete without some consideration of organized religion. The influential nature of religion in society, together with its often being thought of as synonymous with spirituality, necessitates further exploration. Thus, a comparison between spirituality and religion is included in this discussion.

One of the facets that I am particularly interested in is personal disintegration. To be human is to suffer. Some perish in it; some simply survive; and some, it seems, grow, not despite, but because of the suffering. A common thread running through this growth is spirituality. It is my personal and professional opinion that crises are also opportunities; they can serve as doorways to a deeper sense of spirituality and a more meaningful existence.

Grief is one of those crises which may open the door to personal growth. The intention of this project, then, is to examine how grief and spirituality intermix; how grief may serve to change one's spirituality.

It is now, then, that I turn to my review of the literature, to give an overview of the issues relevant to this project. It should be noted that I will quote accurately those sources that use exclusive male-gendered language, but all other content in this project, unless it applies to a specific individual, will be discussed with more appropriate gender-neutral language.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Definitions of Spirituality

Mahar and Hunt (1993) pointed out that it is pointless to search for one all-encompassing and 'true' definition of spirituality. Spirituality, they say, is "in the eye of the beholder" (p. 21). Moberg (1971) concurred with this opinion that the depth and richness of spirituality precludes limited definitions. With time, however, as more and more definitions are circulated, the image becomes clearer, just as statistical measures stand out more with larger sample sizes. The intention of this section is to reach this clearer image through gleaning out common aspects of the various definitions in the literature.

One common aspect found in the literature is a belief in one or more Gods. In his attempt to clarify spirituality, for example, Hardy (1979) quoted from the Concise Oxford Dictionary (6th ed.): "Human recognition of superhuman controlling power and esp. [sic] of a personal God or Gods entitled to obedience and worship; effect of such recognition on conduct and mental attitude." (p. 3).

Wheat (1992) added a more personal dimension to the definition of spirituality in recognizing it as an individual's way of expressing or experiencing an awareness of one's connection to living things as they appear in the larger context of life.

William James (1929, pp. 31-32) similarly recognized an individual component to spirituality. In his Varieties of religious experience, he defined religion as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine". This definition tempts one to substitute the term spirituality for James' use of the word religion. The experiential aspects explored a century ago blend more with our contemporary concepts of spirituality than they do with organized religion.

Allport (1950, p. 57), too, recognized an individual component to spirituality in his claim that spirituality is a "disposition, built up through experience, to respond favourably, and in certain habitual ways, to conceptual objects and principles that the individual regards as of ultimate importance in his own life, and as having to do with what he regards as permanent or central in the nature of things."

The various definitions of spirituality given in the literature seem to have several concepts or ideas in common; individuality of experience is one of the most obvious. There is also a sense of aloneness along with, paradoxically, a feeling of connectedness. Belief in the existence of a transcendent power of some sort is also a typical element of spirituality, as are prayer, an awareness of evil, and a choice to surrender to one's beliefs and life circumstances, even the most painful.

James' (1929) writings serve to explain what "surrendering to life's circumstances" may mean. He claimed that there are two lives, the natural and the spiritual, and in order to participate in the latter, we must let go of our hold on the former. Because of the pain this involves, it is not often initiated by choice. Rather, personal crises often cause the rift between the individual and the natural world.

Crises may also cause a rift between the individual and spiritual worlds; this rift leads to personal disintegration, which in turn may open the door to personal growth.

i. Theory of Positive Disintegration

One psychological theory centers on this concept of development coming not *despite* but *because of* personality disintegration. Dabrowski's (1964) theory of Positive Disintegration takes an ancient wisdom that life comes from death and makes of it a contemporary psychological theory of crisis as opportunity. For Dabrowski, loss, as well as painful feelings of shame, guilt, negative self-esteem, doubt and anxiety may disintegrate the personality. There can be an indescribable despair and hopelessness, but within that is the opportunity to reconstitute oneself at a higher level. In this theory, crises are not to be avoided at all costs, but welcomed as opportunities for higher level development. Frankl (1958, 1984), and Erikson (1963) also expressed views which conformed to this theory.

Frankl (1958, 1984), for example, claimed that one of the main paths on the road to personal meaning is unavoidable suffering. In addition, Erikson (1963) recognized the essential role of disintegration through critical developmental periods. Kurtz & Ketcham (1992) further asserted that people can find meaning through suffering, and it is with this logic in mind that Dabrowski (1964) presented suffering in a positive light.

Noddings (1989) further qualified this by saying that for meaning to be found in suffering, the former has to have more power than the latter. This is no small qualification, as the depth of suffering can be very overwhelming. As Puhakka (1992) described, people reach a point of anhedonia where nothing seems pleasurable any more; and yet she also stated that meaning can be found in this experience. This meaning may have spiritual implications.

The story of John of the cross, and the 'dark night of the soul' is an example of how people who go through sorrow and pain are not necessarily far from God.

Loss thus includes a spiritual dimension (Cournoyer, 1992; Easley, 1987). Aberbach (1987), for example, claimed that spirituality is actually an outlet for one's expression of grief. Specifically, when someone suffers a loss through death, their desire for union with that person translates to striving for union with a divine being. In this way, 'God' serves as a substitute for the lost person. A connection with a "God" is only one way in which spirituality is experienced, however.

James' (1929) discussion of spirituality helps to clarify the different modes, or levels, of spirituality. He (1929) described the once born, or healthy minded, whom the expression 'ignorance is bliss' describes, and the twice born, who experience a higher lever of spirituality due to their increased awareness of the negative in life and in themselves. The twice born, or sick souls, do not rely on only the good in life for meaning and fulfilment. As Kurtz and Ketcham (1992) claimed, one of the first steps to higher levels of spirituality is to be open to one's imperfections. This knowledge, though it may cause some pain, provides room for growth.

Personal growth through pain is difficult to quantify and explain. Dabrowski's (1964) writings are perhaps the most clear on this subject. He described an "increase in self-awareness, self-control, and psychic development. ... Also, the capacity for prospection and retrospection expands, ... and there is a sense of reality of the personality ideal and the need to achieve it." (p. 122).

Dabrowski (1964) concluded that "... the stages of disintegration are related to creativity, general psychic development, growth of self-awareness, and mental health." (p. 122). Other researchers have made similar claims; Chandler, Holden, and Kolander (1992) and Whitney & Sweeney (1992) claim that spirituality is a core component of wellness.

Thus, salvation and meaning refer to a deeper sense of self. There is an increased awareness of one's own weaknesses and faults, an awareness of one's vulnerability to pain in life. This awareness is faced head on, and resolved in the person's mind in a way which may make room for joy.

One of the main, and perhaps most difficult lessons to be learned from personal crises, is that they will happen again. It has been found that spiritual people accept the pain and hardships that life brings (Elkins, 1988; Genia, 1990; Moore, 1992; Nouwen, 1986, 1987; Rahner, 1983; Ulanov, 1980). Choosing to face this requires the abilities quoted from Dabrowski (1964) above. The more one is challenged to *live* life in the face of adversity, the deeper one's self-knowledge and sense of meaning grows.

New faith, sense of meaning to life, new knowledge, and new levels of morality are only a few of the many consequences of spiritual experiences.

ii. Results of Spirituality

James (1929) claimed that the justification for spirituality is in its fruits. There is a plethora of literature (for example, Elkins, 1988; Frankl, 1958, 1984; Genia, 1990, 1991; Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992; Lukoff, Turner & Lu, 1993; Rahner, 1983; and Spencer, 1993) which has suggested that spirituality is important for well-being, that it can be reassuring, life-altering and growth enhancing. It may lead to happiness, a deeper sense of understanding of life and oneself, and a sense of connection to others and to "God" or a universal mind.

Allport (1950) explained that the results of spirituality exist in varying levels. He described the characteristics of the maturing (and, therefore, more spiritual) personality; there is a widened range of interests, an insight into oneself, and a development of an embracing philosophy of life. Further, the mature sentiment is well differentiated and dynamic in its character, enriched by a consistent and persistently influential morality.

The developmental process through which one progresses to become a mature personality is graduated (Allport, 1950). The different factors which form one's religion include, in order: bodily needs, temperament and mental capacity, psychogenic interests and values, pursuit of rational explanation, and response to the surrounding culture. In the first stages, our morality is based more on conformity to culture, whereas the final stages focus more on personal understanding of and independent decision making about one's morality. A newly developed sense of morality, then, is a significant result of spiritual growth, as morality is a core component of one's belief system.

Thus, spiritual/personal conversion is another consequence of spiritual development. As James (1929) noted, regardless of the method of conversion, there is commonly a sense of 'renewal of life', where beliefs that have previously been kept on the back burner are moved to the forefront of conscious life. Unification of the self happens either suddenly or gradually, as the old self is discarded for the new.

As people change, often in a dramatic fashion, it is natural that their outlook on life would follow suit (James, 1929, and Allport, 1950). Consequently, as people's outlooks change, so do their actions and spirits.

To some degree we construct our own "reality". How we see the world affects how we experience it, which in turn affects how it is for us and others. The circularity is clear; since our experiences affect how we see the world in the first place, the importance of spiritual conversion is evident. The way we treat others and our own mental well being can be significantly affected by the state of our spirituality. If we feel serene and secure, as opposed to scared and hopeless, our whole lives and those of the people around us will be affected.

iii. Conclusion

People often report enjoying a more enriched life as a result of a well developed spirituality. Their deeper sense of self, and/or connection to a beneficent 'other' outside of or within the natural world clearly helps them on their journey through life. Attaining a well developed spirituality is a difficult challenge, however. It takes a great deal of self-reflection, honesty, and effort. And sometimes, it takes a crisis such as grief to provide the opportunity for this work to begin.

B. Grieving

> "Grieving is, after all, a call to meaning and reflection" (Clark, 1993, p. 102).

The purpose of this study is to explore the possible relationship between spirituality and grief. The question of whether or not grieving can be a spiritual experience stems from both personal experience, and from research in the areas of spirituality and grief. Many writers (Dabrowski, 1977; Frankl, 1984; Hague, 1995) have claimed that spirituality is often affected by the experience of personal pain.

We move on then from spirituality, and in this section look at the literature on grieving: what is the lived experience of grief? How do people resolve their grief?

i. The Lived Experience of Grief

The lived experience of grief can be momentous; the effects on an individual's sense of self and belief system are astonishing (Clark, 1993). There is a "...deeply threatening quality [to] bereavement. ... A person is broken, devastated, falls apart, or collapses. The pain is wrenching, unbearable, overwhelming, paralysing, all-consuming." (Clark, 1993, p. 81).

Claspell's (1984) description of grief explains this all-consuming nature of grief. In her phenomenological study, Claspell found several common aspects of grief. There is an expansive dimension, where life without the lost object leads to anticipatory grief or anxiety over future losses. The grieving person often suffers from: isolation and loneliness, fearfulness, feeling like a part of him/herself has been replaced by a void; numbness; and anger (Claspell, 1984).

The behavioral responses to these feelings are identifiable (Claspell, 1984). There is a degree of wandering, and searching for something unnamable. Concentration and decision-making ability are often greatly impaired, as are self-confidence and interpersonal relationships. These factors combine to produce a sense of hopelessness.

In addition, Veninga (1985) claimed that there is often a significant fear of abandonment, accompanied by strong anxiety reactions. Regretfulness also intrudes, with wishes that one could go back and change past actions or decisions (Clark, 1993).

Clark's (1993) assertion, then, that after experiencing grief, "one is changed, never to be the same again" (p. 102), is understandable. It is no surprise that grief is seen as a form of crisis.

Personal crises involve six essential features: they are sudden; threatening to security; eroding to self-confidence; successful at surfacing personal fears; unpredictably resolved; and shocking enough to lead to a redefinition of values (Veninga, 1985).

Indeed, because it attacks on such a deep level, grief provides an ideal opportunity to redefine or re-evaluate one's values. Lee (1994) noted that grief challenges us; it confronts us with many questions: Is there justice in the world? What is the meaning of pain? Can I survive this? Is life random? Is there a God? Do I matter, and if so, how?. Grief hits our organized settled lives in a completely random fashion. We are not only faced with a life without the lost object of love, but with the realization that we are not indestructible.

This realization may combine with a loss of meaning in life (Switzer, 1970) and a new sense of isolation in answering the questions that have arisen. The result is a desire to review one's life: the griever explores personal associations with the experience in the hope of finding new meaning (Veninga, 1985).

Frankl (1958) claimed that love is one of the doorways to meaning in life. It follows, then, that lost love may lead to a loss of meaning and existential crisis (Frankl, 1958; Ulmer, Range, & Smith; 1991).

Switzer (1970), for example, stated that we experience an actual loss of self with the death of a loved one. The comment of a co-researcher in Clark's (1993) dissertation study clarifies this point: "it was more than his death, it was part of me dying" (p. 51). Clark concluded that "the loss of ... connection [with the deceased] shows how our lives are entwined, embedded one within the other in a web of meaning." (p. 82).

Thus, it may take the loss of a loved one to show us the extent of our connectedness with others. As a common experience, grief teaches that one is a part of the human condition, part of the ebb and flow of humanity (Hague, 1995). We are connected in our mutual understanding of the pain that we all endure in life.

This lesson, once learned, is not easily forgotten. Similarly, though the lived experience of grief may fade, it never goes away (Claspell, 1984). Bereavement thus often becomes a marker in an individual's life, before and after which personal events are dated.

As a 'life marker', then, grief is clearly a shocking experience. Loss of sense of self, fear of death, lack of meaning, hopelessness, physical symptoms; in isolation, these experiences are bearable, but all at once, they may feel overwhelming. In fact, grieving people often feel so engulfed in pain that they fear they are losing their minds

(Lee, 1994). Anxiety thus enters into the lived experience of grief.

Existential anxiety, experienced as fear of death and lack of meaning, breaks out as external anxiety when a loved object is lost (Switzer, 1970). The effects of this anxiety may be compounded by repression, as our current societal expectations typically discourage healthy emotional catharsis (Claspell, 1984).

This is particularly relevant to the research questions in this thesis. If an individual is to positively resolve a grief experience, repression must be overcome; there has to be an openness to the experience, a willingness to truly feel and be present to the pain.

ii. How the Crisis of Grief is Resolved

Switzer (1970) noted that existential anxiety resulting from grief may be resolved by denial, repression, or sublimation. Research indicates, however, that there are other, more self-enhancing ways to grieve:

> Grieving may be self-full. It opens the way to living one's possibilities again, never in the same way, but in a way which fulfils self and honours the other. Through acknowledging the multifaceted reality of our loss and thereby owning our pain, our sorrow, our anger, our guilt, and the like, we own our possibilities, our potential (Clark, 1993, p. 86).

Thus, because distress may motivate positive change (Edmonds & Hooker, 1992), personal growth can result from grief. With an active choice and a motivation to work hard, grief can be a growthful experience.

a. Growthful Recovery From Grief Involves Choices

"The courage to be - as it is modishly called -
means not just choosing life out there.
The real choice is choosing oneself,
one's individual truth..."
(Hillman, 1964, p. 64)

Though we do not have the option of how we will die (precluding suicide), we can choose how we will live. Grief often forces us to face this decision; we can choose to punish life and other people for our pain (Hillman, 1964), or we can *live*, more fully and more lovingly (Lee, 1994). To believe that life is worth living, that life after grief may in fact be better than life before, takes trust and bravery and strength (Evans, 1970; Hillman, 1964), because choosing life implies accepting the inevitability of further pain.

Spiritual people are accepting of the fact that life includes unavoidable pain (Elkins, 1988; Genia, 1990; Moore, 1992; Nouwen, 1986 & 1987; Rahner, 1983, Ulanov, 1980). The choice of living a full and growthful life thus implies that there is something therein which is worth future inevitable suffering.

Making that choice has practical implications for the way in which one grieves. It means giving in to and surrendering to the pain that it involves, saying 'yes' to it (Kubler-Ross, 1991); it means not repressing or denying the feelings that arise. "To surrender is to give oneself over to possible disintegration, to die a psychological and social death, dying to one's self as self has been known." (Clark, 1993, p. 152). This kind of surrender calls for a degree of self-searching and an internal focus.

b. Introversion As A Way To Resolve Grief

It would be impossible to grow through grief without a degree of introspection. Grieving serves to put us face to face with ourselves. Not only is there an experience of existential isolation, there is an almost brutal look at the 'dark side' of oneself. Kubler-Ross (1978) stated that there is a Mother Theresa and a Hitler in us all. "To continue life, knowing what a horror one is, takes indeed courage." (Hillman, 1964, p.64).

Not only must we face the good and bad in ourselves in order to grow, but we must also face the questions that confront us; Sartre (in Veninga, 1985) claimed that we cannot understand being until we do not understand not being. The search to understand being translates to a search for meaning in life.

c. Meaning And Purpose In Life

Ulmer et al. (1991) defined meaning as "an intrinsic, implicit, fluid clarity about the usefulness of life and can be derived from different sources ... at almost any time." (p. 279).

Edmonds and Hooker (1992) further stated that there are two kinds of meaning. The first is cosmic meaning, defined as an overall life pattern, consisting of a belief in God or other higher power. The second is called secular meaning, which is derived from a belief that life is made of purposes to be fulfilled. The writings of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1978; 1991), which state that our purpose in life is to learn unconditional love, would fit this category.

Sherr (1989) and Fromm (in Switzer, 1970) reflected Frankl's view that people are not destroyed merely by suffering; rather, they are destroyed by suffering without meaning.

Similarly, Edmonds and Hooker (1992) found that the resolution of grief is dependent upon finding meaning in it. In fact, higher levels of existential meaning go hand in hand with lower levels of distress. However, positive or negative changes in belief in God are associated with higher levels of grief, and as such, though strong belief systems may serve to decrease grief symptoms, they may also undergo major changes as a result of such a crisis (Edmonds & Hooker, 1992).

Florian and Mikulincer (1993) stated similar findings, claiming that increased religiosity is associated with decreased fear of death, even when there is increased exposure to death-risk experiences. They concluded that religion is a buffer against the threat of one's own death.

Edmonds and Hooker (1992) also claimed that a positive change in cosmic or secular meaning as a result of a loss is associated with lower levels of grief and higher existential meaning than no change or negative change.

The successful search for meaning results in personal identity, direction in life, and confidence to cope with crises such as grieving in the future (Edmonds & Hooker, 1992). It is no wonder, then, that as the pain recedes, people develop an appreciation for the experience (Claspell, 1984).

Claspell (1984) found that there were essentially two kinds of appreciation, or meaning, discovered as a result of the grief experience. The first was during the experience and consisted of that which makes life livable. The focus is on mere survival, and it results, therefore, in a grief without hope. The second occurred upon recession of grief, and included insights gained from looking back on the experience. This insight was found to be helpful in future losses, and also to be associated with a philosophy of living.

Development of a new philosophy of living, or purpose in life, has been found to be associated with greater life satisfaction, stronger reasons for living, increased social support, and decreased impact of grief (Ulmer et al., 1991). Life is also looked at in a different way, where it is seen in the context of a larger reality and of connection with other people.

d. Life In A Larger Context

> "Life and grief go hand in hand. The process of grieving is the way we release old ways of thinking and feeling to make room for new ones. Endings and beginnings; birth and death, starts and finishes: these are unavoidable rhythms and cycles that make life a totally dynamic ever-changing process." (O'Connor, 1984, back cover).

We have now seen that grief may cause a significant change in the way an individual sees his/her world. A great deal of pain and uncertainty is confronted, and a search for meaning and sense of self ensues. In addition, there is a new outlook on life, a sense of the continuity of things, of how life occurs in a bigger context.

Claspell (1984) found that survivors of grief have an increased regard for life circumstances, and they are more likely to personalize events around them. They realize that their pain is not the only pain in the world, and as a result, they are more empathic to the suffering of others.

Similarly, Lee (1994) claimed that once our own unique loss has been recognized as such, we can see that it is part of a bigger context. Through this process, our connections to others grow and strengthen.

C. Conclusion

This review of the literature on spirituality and grief indicates not only the importance these two qualities have in life, the strong link that exists between them. Through the personality disintegration that results from grief, a higher level of spirituality may be reached.

This conclusion has implications for professionals in the counselling field. Because grief is such a common experience, the opportunities open to us for personal growth are endless. It is hoped that this study helps to elucidate this phenomenon, and highlights the ways in which this growth may occur.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

This study is a phenomenological description of the lived experience of grief and its relationship to spirituality. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to explore whether grief affects individual spirituality, and if so, how. Four people were interviewed, all of whom reported having had spiritually significant grief experiences. Each participated in a one hour interview with me, and subsequent follow-up phone calls to give feedback on my interpretations of their comments. The circumstances surrounding their grief varied, from the loss of a child, to the loss of a parent, grandparent, sibling, and sense of self.

A. Qualitative Compared to Quantitative Research

Quantitative and qualitative approaches to research differ not only in their goals, but also in how they attempt to reach those goals.

The objective of quantitative research is to attempt to identify causal relationships through the manipulation of variables. Prior to beginning the research, in an attempt to avoid any ambiguity which may compromise data interpretation, the variables are defined in as precise a manner as possible (Colaizzi, 178; King & Riggs, 1971; Kvale, 1983; Valle & King, 1978). Then, once variables are defined and their inter-relationships explored, 'objective' explanations for those relationships are sought (Valle & King, 1978).

The constant striving towards 'objectivity' in quantitative research necessitates a separation of the subject from the object. That is, the researcher remains distanced from the objects under study, so as to observe them in a detached and therefore unbiased manner.

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in all of these respects. Instead of looking at causal relationships, qualitative research is descriptive. Variables are not manipulated; they are examined closely, so as to describe them instead of define them (Valle & King, 1978). Further, description of the variables under investigation occurs when the research is complete. As a result, qualitative definitions are not limiting as they can be in quantitative research: qualitative in-depth concept definitions show acknowledgement of the complexity of the issues under investigation.

Yet another difference between qualitative and quantitative research is that in the former, subject and object are seen as being inextricably linked in a meaning-making fashion. Consequently, it is neither possible nor desirable to separate them. As such, in this study, it is understood that the co-researchers were talking with me in a meaningful fashion during the interviews, and it would be impossible to remove the context (and, thus, their interaction with me) from the data. Indeed, if this were done, an important source of information would be lost.

Further, qualitative phenomenological research is interested in the lived experience of phenomena (Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1970, 1983; Misiak & Sexton, 1973; Polkinghorne, 1980; Van Manen, 1984), rather than in 'objective', 'dry', and operationally defined perspectives of them. "The researcher goes beyond a mere compilation of similarities among the examples to a deeper level of description of the essential elements." (Polkinghorne, 1980, p. 24). Thus, qualitative research involves more interest in subjective experience rather than in objective conceptualizations of that experience.

This issue of 'subjectivity' versus 'objectivity' raises another important difference between qualitative and quantitative research.

i. Objectivity

The meaning of objectivity in phenomenological research differs from its definition in quantitative research. The latter speaks of objectivity as a separation of subject from object (Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1983; Husserl, 1977). In phenomenological research, however, "when someone is said to be objective, it means that his statements faithfully express what stands before him, *whatever* may be the phenomenon that he is present to; *objectivity is fidelity to phenomena*" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 52). Thus, in this study, maintaining objectivity has involved remaining vigilant in extricating the true meanings and essences of spirituality and grief.

ii. Co-constitutionality

The individual and the world exist in a necessary interrelationship (Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1983; Husserl, 1977). Because of this, the phenomenological researcher studies phenomena in context; concepts are not separated from the people in which they occur, or from the situations in which they were obtained. Thus, the qualitative researcher works from the assumption that true objectivity is unattainable, and that, given this, it is necessary to maintain awareness of and candour about factors which may affect the phenomenon under study.

With this point in mind, I have enclosed descriptions of the co-researchers in this thesis. The full meaning of the data is more likely to be extricated when it is understood *whom* it came from. Similarly, with the purpose of contextualizing my interpretations, I have discussed my own preconceptions and biases.

B. Data Gathering

i. Co-Researchers

Three of the four co-researchers were chosen from a list of people who had experienced grief. This list was obtained from Frances Hare, the Director of Lay Programs at St. Stephen's College. I was told that the list was comprised of literate people, all of whom had experienced grief. The co-researchers were picked randomly from the list, and phoned. After having the purpose of the study described to them, as well as the way in which they were chosen, they were asked if they would like to participate. No individuals refused to participate. The fourth co-researcher approached me on her own, after having heard through University circles what my study was about. She said that she would like the opportunity to talk about her experience, and would thus like to participate in an interview with me.

I have used the word 'co-researchers' in this thesis instead of the word 'subjects' in an attempt to clarify and show respect for the roles that the four people played in this project. They worked *with* me in exploring their experiences and interpreting them; their feedback was very valuable.

Thus, the co-researchers in this study were chosen because they had all experienced grief in a way which affected their spirituality. Their willingness and ability to talk about their spirituality and how it was affected by their grief experiences were enhanced by the rich variety of stories they brought to the interviews. "As phenomenological researchers seek people who meet these criteria, they look for informants who are articulate and offer wide variations of the experience under study." (Polkinghorne, 1980, p. 19).

ii. Data Collection

The interview as a method of data collection is supported among phenomenological researchers (Becker, 1986; Colaizzi, 1978). The interviewer's goal is to enter the life-world of the individual, and consequently, to understand the phenomenon as it is experienced (Becker, 1986; Kvale, 1983).

Kvale (1983, p. 174) described the mode of understanding in the qualitative interview as involving twelve main characteristics. The interview is:

> 1) centered on the interviewee's life-world; 2) seeking to understand the meaning of phenomena in his life-world; 3) qualitative, 4) descriptive, and 5) specific; 6) presuppositionless; 7) focused on certain themes; open for 8) ambiguities, and 9) changes; dependent upon the 10) sensitivity of the interviewer; conducted in 11) an interpersonal interaction, and possibly 12) a positive experience.

Becker (1986) and Taylor and Bogden (1975) described another important aspect of the qualitative interview: they claimed that establishing rapport with the co-researcher is a key element of the interview. The researcher's personal experience of the phenomenon in question may contribute to this, as do the following; a comfortable setting, the co-researcher's thorough understanding of the research and interview process, initial 'general' conversation to aid both persons in becoming at ease with each other, and the researcher's unconditional positive regard and non-leading stance. (Becker, 1986)

C. Treatment of the Data

The goal of data analysis in phenomenological research is to bring the essential structures of the phenomenon to awareness. "Regardless of which of the phenomenon's particular variations is revealed at any given time, this phenomenon is seen as having the same essential meaning when it is perceived over time in many different situations." (Valle & King, 1978).

This essential meaning is what the researcher aims at finding. With this goal in mind, I used Colaizzi's (1978) methodology, in which data analysis occurs in a series of steps. The first step was to read the transcripts for a sense of the overall feeling, or impression, of the content. The first time I read the transcripts, I listened to the interview tapes at the same time, to help give the emotional context to the written words, and to make any corrections necessary to the transcripts. I then read the transcripts all the way through twice each.

The second step was to extract relevant excerpts, phrases or sentences that pertain to the phenomenon under study, and put them into a table (see the "Protocol" columns in Appendices A-D). I broke each phrase up as there seemed to be natural breaks in the dialogue or content; that is, each complete thought remained intact, and was separated from each other complete thought.

The third step in Colaizzi's methodology is to put each phrase from the second step into my own words while maintaining the essential meaning of the protocol (see the "Paraphrase" columns in Appendices A-D). Examination of these paraphrases led directly into the fourth step; labelling the themes that were emerging from the data (the third column in Appendices A-D). Through all of these steps, I constantly checked back to the original protocol, in order to avoid becoming too abstracted from the meaning of the statements.

The fifth stage involved clustering the themes together, to reach a more general set of themes. Appendix E shows the process of interpretation from the original protocol, to the stage four themes, to the stage five general themes. Thus, the five themes were attained after proceeding through an intricate and organized set of steps involving both an intuitive understanding of the data and an empirical orientation toward it.

Finally, I wrote a final description (Results) of the data, which summarized the 5 general themes which emerged, and explained the sub-themes from which they were formed.

There may be more than one interpretation of qualitative research data. Consequently, it would be possible for someone else to read the transcripts and come to different conclusions than I have. Acknowledgment of different life-worlds is a part of phenomenology: however, with increasing numbers of interpretations, and with the common goal of letting the data speak for itself, there will emerge commonalities of opinion, just as common themes emerge from individual interviews.

D. Reliability and Validity

Because different people may disagree in their interpretations of the data, traditional reliability is compromised. Reliability in qualitative research is evaluated in a different fashion, however. Kvale (1983) stated that varying sensitivities of interviewers help to produce a wider picture of the phenomenon. When meanings are consistent across differences in facts, studies may be reproduced (Wertz, 1986, 1983). Further, bracketing of researcher presuppositions also minimizes bias, and increases the replicability of the study.

In avoiding the constraints of operational definitions, and working so close to the phenomenon as to be actually "in" it, validity is promoted. That is, my lived experience of the interviews, and my bracketing of presuppositions all advance validity.

Bracketing plays a key role in the validity of qualitative work, as researcher bias is an important consideration in qualitative research. As such, bracketing was one of the steps I took to control for this factor. I also checked my interpretations of the data with the co-researchers and with another individual outside of the research. Finally, as I progressed with the data analysis, I repeatedly referred back to the original protocol to verify the reality of my interpretations.

After having completed Appendices A - D, I wrote to each co-researcher, asking for their feedback on my interpretations of their interviews. I sent each person a copy of their respective appendix, explained what the paraphrases and themes were for, and asked that they write any comments or suggestions for me to see. I felt assured that each individual understood the process, as each person has been exposed to it in their own educational history. I enclosed self addressed, stamped envelopes for them to return their comments in. All co-researchers reported being satisfied with my work, and what comments or suggested changes they gave were included in the final draft. Thus, before I went on with my final analysis and discussion, I ensured that I was basing my conclusions on accurate data.

The other individual with whom I checked my interpretations is a Chilliwack teacher, a man who has recently experienced a tremendous loss. At the end of the 1994 school year, one of his students committed suicide. She was a 12 year old girl whom he had taught for 10 months. Thus, he was familiar with the phenomenological experience of grief. He is also a well-educated man, who, once I explained it to him, understood the procedures of data analysis that were completed for this thesis. Thus, though he was not experienced with phenomenological research, his personal experience and ability to grasp the process of interpretation justified his involvement in the work. I asked him to give his opinion as to whether he agreed with my interpretations, and understood how I reached them. He took two weeks to read over the whole thesis and ask me questions. At the end of this time, he reported that he was in agreement with the paraphrases, themes, and final results.

E. Ethical Considerations

The methods that were used in this project were passed through an ethics committee, to ensure that all procedures conformed to current ethical guidelines. Also, the principle of non-maleficence, the obligation to do no harm, was adhered to at all times.

Prior to signing the consent form (Appendix G), the co-researchers were given a study description (Appendix F), and copies of the interview questions that were to be asked (Appendix E). In this way, they were truly giving "informed" consent when they agreed to participate. In addition, all co-researchers were informed of their right to confidentiality, and of their right to terminate their involvement in the study at any time.

F. Subject Descriptions

All co-researchers in this study were given pseudonyms, which will be used throughout the thesis. Also, any possibly identifying information was changed to protect their right to confidentiality.

i. Doreen

Doreen is a woman in her mid thirties, living and working in Edmonton. She is a professional in the health care field, with a graduate degree obtained in Eastern Canada approximately 10 years ago.

During the interview, Doreen exhibited a very calming and peaceful presence. She wore a flowing skirt and blouse, which somehow seemed to suit her personality, and the 'mood' that was prevalent during the interview. She appeared, throughout the whole interview, to be very much 'in' the experience, and in touch with her feelings about it. Though she cried when she described her grandfather's final moments, the tears fell silently, and she brushed them away without stopping her description. When she reported to me that she could now see the gift that he had given her, her smile was profoundly beautiful.

Doreen presented as a soft spoken, confidently articulate woman. Her inner strength became apparent as she discussed her grief experience. It appeared to me that Doreen's inner self is very tough, tough enough to maintain such gentleness on the outside.

Doreen's story was fascinating and touching. She chose to talk with me about her Grandfather's death, because he had meant a great deal to her, and had taught her, through his illness and subsequent death, much of what she now holds dear to her heart.

Doreen's grandfather first became ill when her marriage was falling apart. During the interview, Doreen had repeatedly expressed her intense love of family, and so this loss was understandably terribly painful for her. During his illness, she spent every day, all day with her Grandfather, the man who had always loved her unconditionally. She nursed him back to health, fed him with a syringe, and talked and joked with him. Everyone at that time had thought that he was going to die, but it was through Doreen's care that he survived.

He never knew at that time what Doreen was going through in her personal life, but Doreen said that though it looked like she was helping him, it was he who was helping her. By letting her help him, she reported, he was giving her the most precious gift he could have given at that time.

Later, when he became ill again, Doreen was once more with him, right to the end; She held his hand as he died, and she carried his casket at his funeral.

Doreen's story sounds tragic, and yet during the interview, my only sense of her experience was that it was beautiful. Yes, she was terribly sad to lose him, but she never lost sight of the love that he had for her, or of the gift that he gave her when she needed it most.

ii. Edna

Edna presented as a fairly outgoing confident woman, who is open about her experiences and likes to talk about them if she thinks that it will help someone else. She is a health professional in Alberta and is married with several children.

Edna's religious background was clearly very important to her and reportedly played a significant role in her healing process. However, she attested several times to her personal autonomy in the choice of religious affiliation.

Edna described for me the death of her two year old son, which happened approximately 2.5 years ago. One day he woke up with one eye crossed, and five weeks later, he died of cancer. The five weeks were horrendous for Edna and her family.

At one point during their son's illness, Edna and her husband were given a choice of treatments for their son, neither of which would be a cure, but which would control for pain. One was radiation, which would control for pain fairly well, but which would likely speed up his death, and the other choice was chemotherapy. They chose the former, partly because they thought it would control the pain better, and partly because they could not have handled a terribly sick child at home with all their other children, when it was not a cure they were looking at. And it was the radiation which eventually killed him. A horrific choice, but one which Edna did not regret.

As she talked about her son, Edna cried silent tears as she described his dying moments. Several times, her eyes filled with tears, and throughout the interview, she appeared to be quite 'grounded' in the experiences that she was describing. However, she did maintain enough objectivity to describe her experiences in a clear and thoughtful manner.

Edna's story is more than the story of her son's death - it is the story of how she, her husband, and their children all survived it together.

iii. Timothy

Timothy is a professional in a religious organization, with a doctorate degree in theological studies. He appeared to be eager to talk with me about his experiences, both because he thought that spirituality and grief are inextricably linked (he said that he had never seen that before), and also because he wanted to help out a graduate student ("I know how difficult it can be to find subjects").

Timothy greeted me with a kind and friendly smile, and said that he looked forward to the interview, because he wanted the opportunity to see his experiences "in a different light".

Throughout the interview, Timothy appeared to keep an objective perspective on his experiences. He talked about them as past, and did not seem to be profoundly emotionally affected by discussing them with me. He seemed very open to questions from me, and appeared willing to discuss all aspects of his experience that surfaced during the interview.

Timothy described for me his experience of the death of his younger brother over 40 years ago. Timothy had been a young University student at the time, and was very affected by the loss. He explained to me that he had always felt under the shadow of his brother, that his brother had always been the sports "star", while Timothy excelled at academics. His own successes did not seem to compensate adequately, however, for the inadequacy he felt next to his brother.

Consequently, Timothy had wondered for years if the wrong one had died, if he in fact should have died instead of his brother. His sense of self worth suffered immensely, and he had strong feelings of guilt.

Timothy looked to religion for the answers to the questions formulating in his mind about his brother's death. Interestingly, this career choice led to a chain of events for Timothy which were to take him through a great deal more pain and growth, than he could have foreseen. He began to question his religion and his way of working in it, until he suffered a complete breakdown.

His recovery from this breakdown was what taught him the skills to deal with future pain in life, and with his guilt over his brother's death. It led him to define a more personal religion for himself, and a more personally relevant way of ministering.

It became apparent to me during the interview that, though the initial grief experience Timothy had intended to talk about was the loss of his brother, there was also a second and equally powerful grief experience that he suffered. He talked quite a lot about a time in his life when he became 'burnt out', and had to redefine his career and personal goals. It appeared to me that this time was a real time of grief for Timothy; a time when he grieved for the loss of his own sense of self, and for all the hurts in his life.

iv. Sarah

Sarah is a publisher and teacher in Alberta. She is married with children. Right from the start, Sarah appeared to be a kind and articulate woman, both willing to share her experiences and to learn more about them. She served us coffee during the interview, which was conducted in the courtyard of her home.

Sarah talked with me about the death of her father, with whom she had been very close. He had Alzheimer's disease, and was in a home when he died.

Sarah described what it was like for her to see her father so sick and unhappy. She had thought, at one point, of giving him an overdose of pills, so that he would not have to suffer any more. Though she did not do this, she did encourage him to die, told him that it was okay for him to go, that the family would be okay. She told her father this, not because she believed it (she did not feel like she would be able to make it without him), but because she wanted to release him from his pain.

As a result of her Father's death, Sarah learned much about her spiritual beliefs. She pondered the phenomenon of life after death, of reincarnation, and her own image of God. After her Father died, Sarah was given the opportunity to get to know her Mother better, and as a result of this newfound relationship, she changed the way she thought of God. Through her new sense of love and respect for her Mother and their relationship, Sarah became more in touch with the feminine in herself and in God.

Sarah's grief experience was and is clearly very powerful in her life. She cried frequently during the interview, and had to stop talking a few times, to regain enough control to continue. She reported at the end of the interview that she had not expected to cry at all; that she was surprised at how deeply she was affected by discussing the experience.

Sarah told me in our initial conversation that she wanted to participate in the interview because her grief was something that she was still working on, and that the interview might help her work through some of it.

Sarah appeared to be very much in touch with her feelings and experiences around her father's death. His role in her life was clearly significant, and as such, his death had a powerful impact on her life.

G. Bracketing of Presuppositions

i. My personal involvement with this issue

As a therapist, I have seen how both spirituality and grieving are often a part of the counselling process. Grieving is a part of life which all people must go through, and spirituality often enters into the experience of it.

Specifically, I have observed that when clients have suffered emotional hurts, they often question their spiritual or religious beliefs. Spiritual values are frequently clearer after emotional breakdowns. Clients have also reported seeing, in hindsight, some meaning to their pain. This meaning has served to deepen their connections to themselves, sometimes to others, and to increase life satisfaction.

There is an additional factor that I have seen in my work; there appears to me to be a qualitatively different aspect to people who have gone through grief, faced it head on, and grown from it. For lack of a better word, I call this quality wisdom, and the process, "striving toward wisdom".

To me, wisdom involves a new sense of awareness of one's weaknesses, strengths, beliefs, and of how this life is. Grief tests people, tests their ability to get through things they did not think possible. They become "wise" to their own abilities for coping, and that knowledge helps them in future crises.

Wisdom consists of a sense of being very much in touch with one's beliefs; beliefs about oneself, about spiritual issues, and about the "human condition". There is a new awareness and acceptance that pain occurs in life, no one is exempt, and everyone deals with it in their own way. One client said to me after having experienced grief that she will never be the same again. She said that her old naivete was gone; she knows now that she will experience pain again, and will have to *live her life as fully as she can with that knowledge in mind.*

I have seen these things in clients who have been quite determined to learn something from their pain. Members of this first group have wanted to do more than simply "get through" their grief; they have wanted to grow as individuals. I have also noticed a second group, consisting of people who tended to avoid the questions that were brought up for them during their pain. This second group have not brought forth any spiritual concerns, nor have they expressed interest in that aspect of their lives. Thus, it is the first group, the "striving toward wisdom" group, of whom I wanted to get a deeper understanding in this study.

I am also interested in this topic because my personal spirituality has gone through significant changes as a result of a grief experience of my own.

ii. My View of Spirituality

Thus it is from both personal and professional experience that I decided on this topic of study. My grief experience was what I would describe as "foundation-cracking"; it was very powerful and at the time, very scary. I see it now as having been an opportunity for me to grow. I would categorize myself as part of the first group I mentioned above; as a person striving toward wisdom, and feeling a little wiser as a result of my experience. However, prior to this time, I was a member of the second group; I avoided the emotional and spiritual questions arising from losses in my life.

My belief about the "striving toward wisdom" and "avoiding" groups of people is not that one is morally better than the other, or worth more as human beings. We are all people, who do what we can at the time. I do think, however, that striving toward wisdom may serve to enhance life. Living can be done at a deeper, more spiritual level when one's goal is personal growth. Viewing personal pain as an opportunity to do some real "work" on oneself leads to wisdom, and it is this wisdom that makes us more deeply human.

Spirituality, in my view, is an individual and personal phenomenon. Organized religion may or may not be a part of individual spirituality. I think that a God or a variety of Gods may or may not be a part of spirituality. Spirituality develops as people develop; our life experiences, beliefs, and behaviors all interconnect and affect one another with time. Spirituality is thus rarely static; it is constantly challenged, changed, or strengthened by our life experiences. One of the most influential of these experiences, in my view, is grief.

Though I did expect that my co-researchers would report their grief as having affected their spirituality, I did not have expectations as to how this may have happened. Life is learning, and as I participated in the interviews and did their analyses, I enjoyed learning from the learning of others.

My "religious" background may have affected my interpretations of the data, however. Because of my lack of adherence to any specific organized religion, I am more comfortable with the concept of individual spirituality. That is, I understand the language of individual spirituality better, and feel more comfortable with it, than I do with the language and dogma of organized religion. This may have affected the responses of my co-researchers, as well as the way in which I interpreted the data.

Though I did not tell the co-researchers about my own spirituality, some of this may be communicated nonverbally, for example, by differential responses to certain interviewee comments. It is through this exercise of bracketing that I have attempted to control for this possible experimenter effect.

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

Higher order analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of five main themes (see Appendix E). Together, these themes aid in a greater understanding of the grief experience, and how it affects spirituality.

1) The first theme that emerged was a sense of mystery inherent in the experiences; questions arose for the coresearchers which were to change their lives for ever, and it was the deep and very meaningful mystery of it all which opened the door for those questions to be asked. 2) Through this questioning and appreciation of the mystery, the second theme emerged: the grief experience, though painful, was seen as an opportunity, a gift, to be cherished and valued. The personal significance and power of the gift seemed to give some meaning to the pain, which was, at times, overwhelming. 3) The third theme was a revelation of the depth to which the interviewees suffered; it appeared, in fact, that their ability to cope and survive was tested by the experiences they described.

4) Spiritual beliefs were also challenged by grief; the fourth theme inherent in the protocol was a differentiation between religion and spirituality, a clarification which apparently held great personal significance for the co-researchers. They each came to their own conclusions through intense searching within their hearts. 5) This searching also revealed, for two of the interviewees, a new aspect of spirituality which had previously been neglected; the feminine. This newly realized part of spiritual life constitutes the fifth and final theme found in the interviews.

For ease of understanding, these five themes will be discussed here separately. However, it will become clear that they are all inter-related. Part of the mystery of death is the opportunity it provides for self growth, the birth of a new self. Growth resulting from grief involves a great deal of pain, and the challenge of facing seemingly impossible tasks. Through facing tests to one's spiritual beliefs, realization of the differences between religion and spirituality occurs. Consequently, new realizations about life and one's beliefs, such as the role of the feminine in life and in God, are discovered.

A. Theme One: Mystery

Each of the four interviewees had endured the death of a family member, someone whom they had loved. This resulted in the need to find answers, to find some meaning to their loss, some sense in the life and death of the deceased. Many questions arose, and many conclusions were reached, which seemed to both make sense of and show wonder in the mystery they found before them.

The immense significance of the death of a loved one was well exemplified by Sarah: "I think the experience of being with someone when they're dying, was really quite profound and changed me" (34). "... I see [his death] as being extremely life-changing. Nothing can be the same again... I mean, I've grown and changed and I'm okay now and all of that, but nothing is the same, you know nothing will ever be the same." (59)

It is no wonder, then, that the interviewees felt compelled to make some sense of their experiences. They were facing something so significant in their lives that they simply had to find answers to the questions formulating in their minds. Timothy stated that his brother's death "shook me enough to start having to look for an answer about it." (1). Doreen said that "in Grandpa's case ... he was too important to me to let him just slip by without figuring out what it all meant. That would have been grossly unfair not to learn what he had to teach me at the end." (81). And so, through respect for the deceased and/or a need to find answers, the interviewees wrestled with questions of significant magnitude.

Two of the most significant of these questions involved the relationship between the body and the mind, or soul, and the possibility of life after death. All four co-researchers talked of a separation of spirit or soul from the body. This appears to have stemmed from the desire to understand what happened to their lost loved one after death, and subsequently, what will happen to themselves when they die:

> ... is there any after-life? Is this it for Grandpa? Like, is this just like, now he's dead, now he's dirt. You know? And one day I will be, too, ...(Doreen, 73).
>
> I'm sure I have a need to believe that that's not all there is for Grandpa, because he was too nice of a person for that to be all there was (Doreen, 74).

Through Doreen's search to discover if that's all there was for her Grandpa, she remembered the moment of his death:

> And then as he was drawing his last breaths, they were like big sighs, kind of like really big sighs, and they came not very often. And it was just like the life was going out of him and this sounds really goofy but I just sort of looked up, because I just felt like his spirit was leaving him. The person that was Grandpa was leaving this shell that I knew of as Grandpa. (39).

And so Doreen concluded that her Grandpa has continued to exist in some other dimension, outside of the body that he had inhabited for his lifetime on earth. It was interesting to find that this is not a unique type of belief, as Sarah came to similar conclusions about her father:

> I've been looking at integrating body, mind, more body/soul/spirit stuff, I've been thinking, though around his death, and the death of other people close to me, how looking at his body later, like in the

> casket before the funeral, how it seemed as though he wasn't there, just his body was there, how he had gone somewhere else. ... how we tend to separate our bodies and our spirituality somehow, and not integrate them, I'm sort of struggling with that. Like, how come we end up seeing the body as some kind of shell that we discard on death, that it's not part of who we are, and important in that way. And I don't know, and yet I do know, for me, there was that sense, seeing him later, that he had gone. ... I wanted to take him home with me, whatever, you know, just, I couldn't leave him. But then later it did seem like, like he'd moved on. (8-10).

Indeed, there appears to be a consistent theme in the experiences of the co-researchers; Edna also talked of her belief that her son is "out there somewhere" (14), and that this belief has led to her feeling more at peace with death, and more able to deal with the deaths of other people in her life.

To this point, then, the co-researchers' attempts to resolve the mind/body dilemma have ended in conclusions of duality, where the soul continues to live past the death of the body. Timothy, however, dealt with this issue in a different manner.

Timothy also wrestled with the difference between body, and soul/spirit; however, he appeared to have struggled with it on a different level. His struggle was more centered around disintegration of the self, and how to heal himself once this happened. His brother's death was the catalyst for that search. And so, he did not struggle with the concept of life after death as the others did. Nevertheless, the question of the mind/body relation surfaced for him: "... the idea of the soul itself, so that what happened here is instead of relying on the spirit all the time, and sort of being way up here flying around doing things, I was sort of saying, hey, you've got to look after yourself and do the things necessary to keep your soul grounded, kind of thing." (32). For Timothy, the soul is more connected to body, to being grounded, and the spirit is a different aspect of the self, which is less connected to earthly existence.

Breaking ties with earthly existence is the essence of the mystery of life and death. Doreen, in discussing the moment of her grandfather's death, further expanded on this sense of deep mystery.

> ... maybe at that moment [of death] they have the ability to see me in ways they never saw me before. And to know how important that is to me, better than they were ever able to know when we were limited by using our voice, ... or even limited by our physical structure, you know, for hugging, or whatever, maybe they could see, sort of, the depth of the, my soul more, maybe they can now. (62).

Inherent in this thought is the possibility of a new depth of awareness at and after death, the possibility that all the answers are revealed to us once we have moved beyond this world. Not only does our awareness and knowledge become enhanced, but the whole pattern of existence and co-existence changes; according to Doreen, the entire concept of time changes. She had a sense of timelessness when her grandfather died, and stated that after death, people co-exist in this place where there is no time.

Whether there is a place void of time as we know it, or "heaven", or something else, the questions of body/soul, life after death, and spiritual awareness and growth point to the issue of God, or some creator being. Each of the interviewees referred to a God of some sort, or to Jesus, as being components of their spirituality which related to their grief. The three women spoke of being created by God, and wrestled with how this could fit with their new spirituality. Doreen talked of God being interwoven with family, Edna discussed how though God may have created us, He did not necessarily do it perfectly. Sarah and Timothy opened their eyes to a new side of God they had not previously seen; the feminine.

The mystery inherent in the experiences of the interviewees should now be apparent. Many aspects of their experiences were beautiful; minds were opened to new possibilities and realizations never before considered. This is not to imply that there was not a great deal of pain - to the contrary, the co-researchers did express their pain and suffering, but claimed that they had found positives therein, from which they grew. To have found knowledge, beauty, and opportunity through the fog of such pain is remarkable.

B. Theme Two: Grief as an Opportunity, a Gift

All four interviewees agreed that there is good to be found in tragedy. Each one of them found things to be grateful for in their grief experiences, and their new spiritual awareness was the greatest of those gifts.

Doreen commented that it was her grandfather's death which "forced me, not forced, but strongly encouraged me to question some things..." (77). Through that questioning, she discovered the core aspects of her spirituality: a sense of the beauty of death, a connection with her past and future relatives, as well as the belief that receiving may actually be giving, and vice versa.

Edna's spirituality was similarly affected by her son's death, and she claimed to be "very positive" (50) about those changes. Though the death of her son was horrendous for her and the rest of the family, she was able to recognize that "the fact that we were all there when he died was a miracle, in itself" (13). Through hard work and soul-searching with her family, she has been able to continue on with living life. "...it's been a long process but it's been a good process. ... I've had to look back on it and you have to draw the positive out of it. You can't draw all the negative out of it." (15)

Sarah also discovered things to be grateful for in her father's death. She began to appreciate her Mother in new ways, and to become closer to her than she had when her father had been alive. She saw her father's death as the catalyst for the growth of that relationship. Thus, his death obtained some meaning, some purpose, as did the death of Timothy's brother.

Timothy claimed that "if [my brother] hadn't died, I'd have been stuck in my old style of spirituality 'cause I wouldn't have been shook loose from it. That's almost like saying that because he died, I was able to live..." (68).

The deaths, therefore, were seen not only as endings, but also as beginnings. They opened up new chances for those left behind, new ways of experiencing life, which were both more spiritual and satisfying. Doreen expressed this with a depth of feeling characteristic of her:

> To me [the experience] was [beautiful]. I mean, there's the time when I talk about him actually leaving, losing him, that I probably will cry to the end of my days about thinking about that because it really hurts, but no, he was a very big person in my life, helping me to become what I am, and to be proud of the things that are a part of me, both in terms of my heritage of my family, and also in terms of, sort of, the things that I made of myself, and the things that I've learned from him (87). I think that his death, because of how close I felt to him, really encouraged me to think about some of these things, which is, I don't know, a pretty enormous gift to give your granddaughter, the opportunity to explore her own faith in your death (78).

Death and grief, therefore, can be positive. They can provide us with unique opportunities to grow. Death can, in fact, be the vehicle through which this growth occurs. All four co-researchers talked of a purposeful search for answers which they conducted by way of making sense of their experience. Both the sense of mystery to the experience, and the void that was left behind, led to this desire for answers.

Timothy's search began because his brother's death "shook me enough to start having to look for an answer about it" (1). It led him to the ministry which further challenged his sense of self and personal spirituality so much as to result in an inner struggle which took years to get through. "... I call it the death and rebirth of another aspect of spirituality where one image had to go and be replaced by another image about what life was all about" (33). This process of discovery that Timothy described was also experienced by each of the interviewees. Through a death and rebirth of different aspects of their lives, their spirituality was changed and strengthened. The challenge was to survive the death part of the cycle, and to learn from it, as the third theme revealed.

C. Theme Three: Grief as a Personal Test

Grief brings many things with it; pain, questions, and often some answers. It appears that the questions asked and the lessons learned depend on the individual, and his or her present life issues. Grief, then, challenges people, provides them with the opportunity to confront themselves, and learn the lessons that they need to.

Timothy, for example, had lived under the shadow of his brother for most of his life, even after his brother's death. Timothy's self esteem, therefore, suffered. When his brother died, Timothy finally faced those feelings. His faith was shaken, his mental and physical health were severely affected, his guilt over being the one who survived was brought to the surface. Consequently, his ability to take care of himself and to perform well in his job were compromised. Timothy had to face his self doubt and guilt if he was to survive. So, he did. Because of the chain events that his brother's death initiated (choice to enter the ministry, crisis of faith), Timothy faced his fears and weaknesses and learned to live more fully. "And so that religious now means more of a fullness of being human, and seeing life as fully as I can, appreciating it in all its ups and downs." (6).

Edna, too, faced a challenge which was to test her greatly. She and her husband chose the medical treatment for their son, the treatment which, though it minimized his pain, was to kill him in the end. She prayed for strength to get through his illness and death, not only as an individual, but as a couple and a family. She learned to make priorities, to accept her other children as they are, and to accept herself and her way of grieving. Clearly, her ability at the time of the interview to say that she saw positives in her son's illness and death was the result of much painful soul-searching and effort. It did not just "end up" that way; she worked very hard to face the challenge that her son's death presented.

Sarah's father's death challenged Sarah in a similar fashion. She had thought of giving him an overdose of pills at one time, but instead she encouraged him to die, told him that she would be okay without him, though she did not believe that to be the case.

> "I felt afterwards as though I'd lied to him because I tried to tell him that we'd be okay, 'cause he always worried about us, and tried to look after us, and so when I was giving him permission to die, I was trying to say it was alright. We'd be all right, and that

> he'd given us so much. But afterwards, afterwards I felt like I hadn't, that wasn't true." (33).

Thus, in order to free her father from his unhappy state, she faced what she thought of as the impossible. In encouraging him to die, she was forcing herself to cross that bridge. And at the other side, was her mother, there to become closer with and to learn from.

Doreen was tested as well, when her Grandfather died. Her life was falling apart, and her Grandfather, the man who was her last support at the time, died. "You can't ignore it, because you don't have one remaining cornerstone of who you are, and so, you can't just ignore that it happened because, like your building is tipping over at this point. There's no other wall to lean against, and you know, the house is about to fall over, so it's like, let's figure out what's going on here and make something out of it." (80). Because of the other life circumstances in which she found herself, the death of her Grandpa left her with nothing but herself, her love for her Grandpa, and her ability and desire to learn from him. So she, too, faced her test, learned from her Grandpa's death, and saw the beauty in it.

Thus, grief experiences lead us to an impasse, where we face seemingly impossible challenges. It is at this point that we face self-disintegration: "... my, sort of, personal foundation... was falling apart. ... shook me to my foundations, and made me sort of, or encouraged me to question things that I always believed" (Doreen, 64); "...what I felt was just totally disconnected, or just as if whatever I had connections to the family, or to life, itself was cut off and so I was let loose, drifting around..." (Timothy, 14).

We also become more aware of the inevitability of pain in life; of the fact that death can happen any time, that death and sorrow are parts of life. " ... death is an important part of life, very important, just as important as being born" (Doreen, 61).

Once we overcome our self doubt and fear, and we 'pass' the test, our eyes are opened up to new lessons, new ways of living and believing, and our lives are thus enhanced.

D. Theme Four: Religion Versus Spirituality

Another theme that arose from the interviews was a differentiation between religion and spirituality. Each of the co-researchers expressed differing levels of adherence to organized religion, and this affected their view of spirituality.

Edna and Timothy appeared to have seen religion and spirituality as being synonymous; however, they adjusted their religious beliefs to fit with their concepts of who they are, and how life is. "Before, being religious, for me, meant that I was just following the commandments, being a good kid, and always being, kind of, feeling uptight with being good, kind of thing, just overly conscientious. (Timothy, 3) ... now I see it as being more in touch with being human". (Timothy, 5). Similarly, Edna described her religiosity as involving personal choice: "... my parents were very liberal in their thinking, in their religious thinking, and maybe that helps. I mean, maybe knowing that it didn't have to be cut and dried, and it didn't have to follow this, you know, this way of thought. Maybe that helped to be able to be more divergent in the way I think and a bit more accepting in the way I think" (29).

Sarah and Doreen, however, made a clear distinction between religion and spirituality. Sarah commented that "I would say I am a spiritual person. I'm not sure I'm a religious person." (1) Similarly, Doreen stated that "I tried to be religious and I wasn't very good at it." (8).

The decision of what religion and spirituality are is made after a period of questioning. Grief experiences, as noted, provide the impetus to begin that questioning.

Timothy, the religious professional, seemed to go through the most profound and personally relevant religious and spiritual crisis. His desire to understand his brother's death led him to religion as a profession, and it was his way of working in the field which led him to leave the church. "I found the ministry to be a strait-jacket for me. ... I thought it would be a real freeing thing, but it wasn't, okay. So I felt I had to behave in certain, to sort of believe in certain things,..." (21). Then later, again, once he had learned to accept and love himself, and to make his religion more personally relevant to himself, he returned to the church. "I spent three years down there ... searching, again, for a way of ministering that was, for me, a little more authentic than what I'd been used to". (24).

Sarah and Doreen both came from organized religious backgrounds, but through disappointment with things they encountered there, they chose more personally relevant spiritual paths.

Regardless of the spiritual or religious affiliation of the individual, however, organized religion appears to provide a strong basis or foundation from which to clarify one's beliefs, and make them more personally meaningful. Doreen, for example, "... grew up in a very, what I would call religious household, with a really strong theological component, so it wasn't just a strict adherence to a bunch of rules. There was a lot of thoughtfulness that went with it. (3) ... I'm not saying that I'm sorry I learned any of it, or that I should have never gone to church, because I think I'd have a sort of a foundation from which to question some of these things...." (66).

Similarly, for Edna, "there's always been a spiritual basis or a religious basis, and I believe in that" (2), and this clearly served a very important function for her, as "you've got the basis to go from and you've got something to look, try and find the answers and hopefully someone to go to, to help you find the answers. Whereas, if you've got no religious basis, who do you get angry at? Who do you question or that sort of thing?" (25).

Spiritual or religious orientation, then, is a personal choice, which is made from the consideration of past teachings, and personal experience. Even though co-researchers in this study presented different beliefs, and they had each questioned their beliefs to different extents and with different results, they all held open mindedness and acceptance of others in high regard. "I've always been able to say that everybody grieves in a different way, and everybody believes in a different way, and there's no right way or wrong way. It's only what's right or wrong for me, as long as it's not hurting someone else." (Edna, 52).

To conclude discussion of this theme, then, differences between religion and spirituality may emerge when individuals question their faith as a result of a grief experience. Or, the two may be thought of as synonymous. Nevertheless, some questioning of religious beliefs occurs. For that reason, having an organized religious background may be helpful; it provides one with a basis from which to search. The end result is a personally meaningful set of beliefs which may or may not adhere to organized religion. Importance is placed on acceptance of individual differences in belief systems; this open-mindedness is essential for new beliefs or realizations to occur.

Often, religion ends up being about a belief system, and spirituality, more about an integration of experience with meaning. Spirituality, is thus less cognitive; there is a sense that there is more to life, and the 'more' is sacred.

E. Theme Five: Role of the Feminine

Timothy and Sarah, through their open mindedness to new realizations, and through their own personal religious and spiritual searches, discovered a new aspect of life which they had never before considered; the feminine.

Sophia, a feminine word, is the Greek term for wisdom, meaning 'beyond mere understanding' (personal communication, Dr. W. Hague, Summer, 1995). Timothy, in his search to understand himself more fully, realized that "Women [had] been missing." (58). Through his relationships, he was able to see and honor the feminine part of himself, and to include that in his religious worship. "...now I could see myself as being all the images of the God and Goddesses that were part of it. And so, ... instead of monotheism, I moved into polytheism where, you know, I could see all these goddesses in Greek mythology, and I really enjoyed that." (48)

Sarah also came to know a more feminine view of God, as a result of her father's death:

> I'm sort of exploring the idea of God the father, and my father as God, in it, because I grew up, very much, with a male God, as most of us did then. He this and He that, and God the father, and that was quite comfortable for me because my father was very loving and kind and quite spiritual in his own way, very giving, very caring, couldn't do enough for people. ... as I got back into going to church, in more recent times, I discovered that people were describing God in many other ways, not necessarily as God the father, and becoming a little more aware of how uncomfortable it is for people who have been abused to think of God as a father figure, a little more sensitized to that. Then I've started to try to re-think my image of God,... and one of the things that happened with my father's death

> is that I've started to see my mother in new ways. ... And now, with him out of the picture, Mom and I have become quite close, and I've come to appreciate her in new ways.... So, I'm starting to, as I start to know her, and value her, and I suppose start to value my own likenesses to her, the ways that we connect, the similarities I do have to her, then that starts to shape a different view for me of God. If God is in me and if I am created in God's image, then I'm also, there's also the feminine side to that, view of God (24-26).

Sarah and Timothy discovered and learned to honor a new part of themselves, and of God, of which, before their grief experiences, they had not been aware. For Timothy, it was having his whole sense of self literally shattered that he began a journey of self-knowledge. He looked at each of the broken pieces of himself as being represented by different Goddesses, and he developed this new awareness through his relationships with women. Through loving women as people, he was able to love the feminine parts of himself.

Examination of these five themes brings to mind an analogy; grief is like a locked stained glass door, situated at the end of a corridor - there is no way around it. One can see, through the beautifully colorful glass, a hazy picture of what is on the other side of the door; it is mysterious and full of wonder. Finding the key to the door is the challenge; it is on the ground somewhere near the door, but the ground is strewn with sharp fragments of glass from previous attempts at simply breaking the door down. At times your hands may be cut, and the task may seem impossible, but just when hopelessness threatens to take over, a part of the key reveals itself, or another look at the colored glass renews hope. When the door is finally opened, new lessons have been learned, and new beliefs developed, which help with future doors we face.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

The process of completing this project has been an invaluable learning experience for me. It began, as I stated in my 'bracketing of presuppositions', with my own grief experience. This thesis has thus served as one leg of my own journey; it has helped me make sense of my own experience, and to understand the experiences of the people I encounter in my work as a therapist.

The literary research and the analysis of the data helped me to do this. But beyond even those activities, which forced me to think in new ways about grief and spirituality, were the co-researchers who volunteered to participate in this project.

I was absolutely honored and touched by the depth of sharing that each of the four people showed me. They opened their hearts to me, and shared parts of themselves which they hold dearest. I think that their common experience of grief contributed to this profound generosity; grief serves to accentuate our common humanity. We are all part of the human condition, we all suffer in our own ways, and once we have experienced some of that suffering, our connection to others is strengthened. And so, the greatest learning that I think can be gained from this project is through the openness, bravery, and caring that each interviewee demonstrated, in the interest of helping other people understand grief and spirituality.

Positive disintegration; the phrase itself sounds rather frightening. How could personal disintegration be positive? How could a complete loss of meaning, sense of self, and purpose in life be a positive thing? The reason: it opens up the mind and heart to new possibilities and meanings which can enrich one's life and give it new meaning.

Grief is one door to positive disintegration. Grief over the loss of something dear can leave us cold, alone, and feeling completely vulnerable. Personal disintegration occurs; feeling vulnerable, weak, and unable to deal with anything at all, while knowing that one must deal with it. Timothy went to the hospital for a time, Edna prayed for the strength to get through, and Sarah believed she simply could not do it. There were no options, however; each of them did get through, and learned to rely on themselves in new ways.

Do all people take the opportunity to grow from grief, as these four did? This is one question that arose for me while conducting these interviews. The presence of the opportunity to grow does not necessarily mean that it will be used; disintegration is not necessarily positive, unless the individual decides to make it so. The willingness to endure the pain fully seems to lead to deeper meaning in life, to increased life satisfaction, spirituality and joy.

Each of the respondents in this study seem to have chosen to grieve deeply. For example, Doreen stated that she did not see a choice but to learn from her Grandpa's death, and that "maybe people who are just sticking their head in the sands are actually dealing with it on another level, you know, 'cause I find it hard to believe that it's not going through at all, just might not be very conscious" (80). So, perhaps there are different levels of learning which may occur as a result of grief, which depend on the degree of readiness of the individual. Doreen also said that she had been ready at that point in her life to learn from her Grandpa's death; ready in terms of maturation, and ready because she had no other choice. She had nothing left to lean on, to believe in, and so she had to make something new for herself.

That seems to be a strong function of grief; it takes everything away from you, so that you have to learn new ways of thinking and acting if you are to survive. What is it, though, that dictates what is learned? There are some common things that are learned through grief such as the wonder and mystery of life and death, and new developments in one's personal religion or spirituality.

It also seems, however, that each individual is given the opportunity to learn something about oneself that s/he has needed to learn for a long time. It is as though we know there is a part of ourselves that needs developing, and that aspect comes to the forefront when a grief experience occurs. Timothy, for example, had felt under the shadow of his brother long before his brother's death, and Timothy's sense of self-worth suffered as a consequence. When he experienced his disintegration, through his lack of self care and self knowledge, he faced these feelings, and learned to deal with them.

Sarah had lost out on the opportunity to connect with her Mother deeply all of her life. This led to a lack of awareness and love of the feminine in God and in herself. The loss of her father was the catalyst for this missing connection. Perhaps she had had a sense that this was missing for her, and that's why she got in touch with it when her father died.

Doreen had been present at the deaths of other relatives previous to the passing of her Grandfather; it seems as though she always had a sense that there was something she was to learn from death. Then, when her life circumstances were such that she was ready to learn it, and her Grandpa's time came, she grasped the opportunity.

Thus, we may know what is lacking in ourselves, but hesitate to take the steps to develop those things, because of the pain it would involve. Grief provides an ideal opportunity for this work to begin.

And so, if some of what we learn and question through grief depends on our own individual issues and priorities, it is less surprising that Timothy, the religious professional, appeared to have struggled the most with his spirituality. He had chosen to devote his life to the religious profession, and it therefore makes sense that due to his increased exposure and dedication to religiosity, he would have the most questions about it.

Timothy's problems with religion were similar to those that Doreen and Sarah expressed. For Timothy, the rules and regulations which seemed to make no sense caused him to question religion. Doreen sensed a lack of sincerity present in the people who attended the churches she had attended. Sarah experienced a tremendous betrayal by a church member, and was not supported by the church. All of these issues point to a common problem; the administration, can, at times, overrun the personal nature of religiosity or spirituality. It is no surprise that all four co-researchers had learned to define their spirituality for themselves; even Edna and Timothy, who, though they remained very involved with organized churches, had still questioned the beliefs they were presented with and come to their own conclusions.

This explains the open mindedness of the interviewees; the acceptance that the three women had expressed for other people's opinions. Having changed and developed their own belief system, they seem to have learned that everyone has the right to do the same; and if our conclusions are different, then that is okay. Grief teaches the transitoriness of everything in this life; our spirituality after grief reflects that.

One of the other most profound thoughts that I had after my grief experience, and which was present in the interviews I conducted, was the sense that nothing will ever be the same again. I am changed for ever, and as such, my life is forever changed. Perhaps that is also what makes it an undoubtedly spiritual experience.

The lessons learned here about grief and spirituality have significant implications for therapists in their practice. As a result of this study, in future, I will know to look for and find the positive in the grief experiences of my clients; I will facilitate their finding of those things for themselves. When the pain seems too much to bear, I will be able to tell them with confidence that it will improve, that beautiful things can result from the experience. I will expect some questioning of my clients' spiritual or religious beliefs, and I will encourage that. My open mindedness to clients' new and different beliefs will facilitate their personal growth.

Perhaps in equal proportion, if not more, to the number of answers this project has presented, questions have arisen which it would be beneficial to explore.

The three women were all present at the actual death of their loved one, and each of them remembered that event as being profoundly spiritual. This topic itself could be a whole thesis research question. What goes through the individual's mind at the moment of death? What does it feel like? The co-researchers here provided some answers to these questions: Edna's son looked so peaceful after his death, that she began to believe in an after life, Doreen felt an immensely powerful connection to her great grandmother when her grandfather died, and this led to her belief in a timeless afterlife, where we all connect in some way; Sarah had an overpowering sense of her life changing for ever.

Another question arising out of this research is the possibility of gender differences in the grief experience, and in personal spirituality. Timothy's search seemed to be on a different level from the three women. His struggle was more within himself, with coming to know who he was as a person, and accepting that. The women talked less of learning about themselves, and more about existential questions, such as the existence of an after life and the parameters in which it may exist. This may relate to the fact that Timothy is a religious professional, and so has less inclination to question these existential issues. Similarly, it may result from the differences in gender, and all that that entails in our society; this, too, is worthy of further research. Women are taught, for example, to be more open about their feelings, and as a result, it is not uncommon to find women who seem more self-aware than some men. If, as I have contended, grief serves as a catalyst for making changes that we need in our lives, then this gender difference may have real implications for the experience of grief.

I would also suggest further research into the differences between people who do choose to learn from their grief experiences; the people who search the ground for the proper key, as compared to those who would rather just break through the door, and not face the questions in front of them.

Another issue to consider for future research is regarding people who get 'stuck' in their grief; what is it that makes them 'stuck', and how can they get out of it?

Additional research would also be beneficial in the area of different types of grief. Would individuals grieving over the little deaths in life, such as a divorce or job loss grieve in the same manner as the people presented in this project? Further research would help clarify this. A study with a larger number of subjects of varying experience would be suggested. Varying the education of the co-researchers would also be indicated. The co-researchers in this study were all well educated, having at least one degree. Higher and lower education levels may have real implications for the way in which one experiences grief and spirituality.

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VII. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol, Doreen

1. I think ... the last question you had on that sheet was the easiest to answer and that was: are you a religious person?	Religiosity is easy to define	Religiosity
2. And that kind of ties in, I would say that ties in sort of with describing some of the before and the after aspects of the, my grief experience.	Religiosity relates to grief	Religiosity affected
3. Because my, I'll just start talking and it'll just come out however it wants to and you can edit it for whatever it is you're looking for, but as, growing up, I grew up in a very, what I would call religious household, with a really strong theological component, so it wasn't just a strict adherence to a bunch of rules. There was a lot of thoughtfulness that went with it. But, nevertheless, I would call it a very religious home.	She was brought up religiously, with a strong theological component	Organized religious basis
4. and I was a kid who always had trouble with that. Always.	Always questioned organized religion.	Questioning religion
5. ..it seemed very hypocritical to me.	Organized religion is hypocritical	Questioning religion
6. And it wasn't that I didn't have a faith. It was that people didn't seem genuine, to me. And I had a real keen sense of that and I hated it.	Faith not reflected in organized religion.	Questioning religion
7. I would walk to another church, and go by myself, just kind of to see what was going on somewhere else, and see if it might be more to my liking,	Early exploration of different religions.	Questioning religion
8. I tried to be religious and I wasn't very good at it.	Not able to be religious.	Questioning religion
9. I didn't like it. I didn't suit me.	Religion did not fit with her sense of self.	Personal choice
10. And so I started, as a young adult, to kind of explore the options not in any sort of organized way.	Early exploration of religion	Questioning religion
11. I couldn't figure out how to express or experience my sense of spirituality in a way that felt right for me.	Confused about how to express individual spirituality.	Personal choice

12. Didn't work very well for me, and it never did.	Organized religion never worked for her	Personal choice
13. I think mostly because it had a real political component to it. Organized religion is very political and that just didn't sit well with me at all.	Organized religion is political	Questioning religion
14. So, it was my grandfather that died, and sort of a, his illness and death occurred at a really, sort of, critical point in my life in a lot of other personal ways. Like, my relationship was falling apart, my marriage,	The illness and death occurred at a point of personal disintegration.	Personal disintegration
15. And my grandfather and I had always been close, so I spent a lot of time with him when he was ill, very ill, they couldn't do anything, like, the doctors were just waiting for him to die.	She spent a lot of time with him, as he was thought to be dying	Connectedness
16. I did have the time to spend with him, so I stayed with him for a good month solid, almost, like I went home to sleep and stuff, but I was there every day and I fed him with a syringe, a tiny, tiny little syringe that had no needle on it so I could measure how many cc's of liquid he was getting. And I would tease, because he loved teasing. I'd coax him, and talk to him, and just, he would choke on just little bits of liquid, and I kept this up, and people, like, the other family came and visited but they didn't have the kind of time I had, and he actually recovered.	He recovers, thrives on loving attention. The ultimate outcome is not changed but he has a period of health before the final crisis.	Love
17. And I know that it had, it did have a lot to do with the fact that I stayed with him and I saw him through that, and my grandfather had the most amazing will to live, amazing will to survive. And he wanted to be alive, and I knew that and I wanted him to have that opportunity.	Grandfather lived because of her nurturing and because of his will to live.	Will to live
18. ..qualitatively it was different this time. I knew that, because he was tired. He'd been, you know, suffering with the symptoms or the side effect of the stroke for a long time, and he was very, very sick and he was in pain, and he wanted it to be over.	He was ready to die.	Acceptance
19. So, I still fed him but not the same way I had, but not in the same, more for his comfort than for because I thought that he would get well again.	Nurturing for comfort instead of recovery.	Acceptance
20. It was a different feeling to it.	It felt different this time, he was now ready to die.	Intuition
21. I was with him when he died. I was with him when he was drawing his last breath, and ... that was a spiritual moment for me.	Presence to the dying matters.	Death

22. And then some spiritual thoughts came out of that, some ponderings.	Questions arose from his death.	Search for meaning
23. Everyone kept saying to me, you know, D. you've just done amazing things here. Your grandfather is alive because of what you've done for him. And, you know, maybe that was true, in a sort of physical sense, but to me there's a whole lot more going there that people didn't know about	She saved him physically, but there was a depth to that experience not readily visible.	Helping
24. because I was suffering so terribly. I was hurting so badly over things in my own life, which I did not talk, I never spoke to Grandpa about any of that. ... and yet my opportunity to care for him, I needed so desperately to be with him, to know that he cared about me at a time when things were going really badly for me, and I needed him to survive. I needed him to live right then. I really did.	She was suffering terribly, and his love for her was healing.	Pain
25. his letting me help him, which looks so altruistic to everyone else, was the most amazing gift he could have possibly ever given me.	In receiving, he was giving.	Gift
26. I don't know if that's a spiritual thing, per se, but to me it gets to the essence of being human, and the fact that giving, what looks like giving is not necessarily giving. And that what looked like receiving to everybody else, was an amazing gift to me.	Essence of humanity is that receiving is giving, and giving is receiving.	Finding answers
27. A gift of healing for me when I desperately needed it, he gave something that nobody else could have given to me right then in that way.	Unique gift of healing.	Gift
28. the chance to help him. I needed to help somebody. I didn't, I don't know if it was I needed to be needed. Maybe. Maybe.	To help is healing.	Need
29. and even though it looked like I was helping him, he was nurturing me by being... and it felt safe, and it felt healing to be with this person who had been with me all my life, who loved me unconditionally	Love is safe and healing.	Love
30. and how I could give him the opportunity for life when he wanted it, when there just seemed to be so much destruction in the rest of my life, so much loss, and blackness, and a sense of death, not in a physical sense, but a sense of death in, like, other important relationships to me. ... you might call that spiritual.	Saving his life through a cloud of death and blackness was a spiritual experience. To maintain life when death is so close is power.	Life
31. That was one of the really profound things I learned from Grandpa, was that what looks like receiving is not always receiving. It sometimes can be an amazing gift to the person who you let help you.	Receiving is a beautiful gift.	Finding answers

32. letting people help you is not a sign of weakness, it could be an amazing gift, to give them the opportunity to do that. And that's what I learned in a really strong, powerful way that will never leave me.	Will never forget that receiving is giving.	Finding answers
33. I felt like he and I had a certain special bond that was uniquely ours.	Unique bond with Grandpa	Connectedness
34. because I had been with him through that previous time in a very real physical sense and helping him, I felt like I needed to be there when he died. I needed to be with him and I felt incredibly privileged that he would alow me to do that, to be with him at the end of his life.	Honored to be with him at his death, because of their close relationship and history	Gift
35. ... he didn't die instantaneously. It was just like a process.	His death was a process.	Process
36. I don't know how much he knew about who was with him at that point, but just to know that somebody else who I never knew, and I guess I have this really incredible sense of this, is a sort of timelessness, or multigenerationalness about this death and the grieving that went with it and the contemplation of his life was that someone who I had never met, who is my family and my connection, was with him at the very beginning of this life, gave birth to him and was there, and since has died themselves. And then her am I, their great grand daughter, sitting with their son, and holding his hand when he died, you know.	His death led to a sense of timelessness and connection to her great grandmother.	Connectedness
37. Kind of this intimate connection with people I've never known. And how we probably both loved him unconditionally, and yet knew him in very different ways.	Connection with unknown family because of common feelings for grandfather.	Connectedness
38. And I kind of had this keen sense that, like I wanted somebody to do something to make him come back to life, even though I knew that's not what he wanted at this time, but I didn't want to lose him.	Knew it was his time to die, but didn't want to lose him.	Pain
39. And then as he was drawing his last breaths, they were like big sighs, kind of like really big sighs, and they came not very often. And it was just like the life was going out of him and this sounds really goofy but I just sort of looked up, because I just felt like his spirit was leaving him. The person that was Grandpa was leaving this shell that I knew of as Grandpa	His soul left his body.	Separation/ continuation of body and spirit

40. ... and I just wanted to have a sense of his ... that he knew that I cared about him, even though I know he already knew that, like, he had to... and I needed to be holding his hand. I was holding his hand after he was dead, which is, because I know it was the last time I would ever hold his hand, and I remember in those last days, holding his hand ... because he had been so kind to me with his hands, all the things that he must have done with those hands in his life, like, he was a homesteader and milked cows, and just all kinds of things, you know, raise my mom. And, just everything, made love with my grandmother. ... all the loving things, the things that all go with being alive, you know, and I wanted to remember his hands, and to this day, like, I just remember his hands so well, because they were so gentle and so loving to me.	Honoring his hands, which represented all his kind and loving deeds in his life	Love
41. I was up front carrying ... and so I took my Grandpa, along with some of my cousins, took my Grandpa to his grave site, which was another really sort of ... experience because it was such a strong finalization of being with him right to the end and feeling like I had done everything I could for him and that I wanted to have that sense that I had sort of taken care of him. That was important to me. And I think he would have liked it that way you know.	Completion, finality	Completion
42. this is what I would call a sort of a spiritual thought or perception of things, and it's a little unusual, but I guess I started thinking about time, and thinking about, because we all live in time. We can't exist outside of time, and yet, in my conception of maybe an after life, or, I don't even know if it's after life, I just have this sense that there's somewhere this sense of timelessness where everybody, or every soul, or whatever, exists sort of concurrently, you know. A place where there is no time which is a little bit hard to conceive of, and I haven't really got my head around it...	An afterlife without time where we are all connected.	Life after death
43. ... where we're kind of time bound here, but, you know, it could just as easily happen that, like my Grandpa would have been my contemporary, maybe I would have known him as an equal adult, not as a granddaughter, and to say, come to speak of how I would I have known him there, and yet this element of time in this life, here and now, made it a very special relationship, because I wasn't his contemporary, I was his granddaughter and I got special treatment as a result of that. It made it a unique relationship, or I would have respected and enjoyed, I think, no matter which side of time I had known him on, when he was younger, me older. I played with time in my mind, I guess.	This life consists of timebound connections. Moves past the usual categories of who is adult caregiver and 'older' and who is child.	Connectedness

44. ... then thought of ways that, because his death had sort of connected me to these other generations before me, and to realize that there will be generations after me that have some connection to me in a very real physical way like that.	Death connects generations.	Connectedness
45. ... in some sense there is a timelessness about all of this, and that somewhere, I think, and I don't know why I think this exactly, probably because of partly the way I was raised, and it's called heaven, but that I will exist concurrently, or I will know all these people that I only know by association now, you know. That we will somehow connect, you know.	Connection with others in the place of timelessness	Connectedness
46. When time isn't a factor the way it is now.	There is a place where time does not mean the same as it does here.	Timelessness
47. I want to know that I will see him again, or be with him, or, 'cause we really enjoyed each other	Continuation of the soul	Life after death
48. (In response to the question of if she is religious) No. Not any more.	Not religious	Organized religion versus spirituality
49. They didn't come the day he died, necessarily, but they came about as a result of me wanting or needing to think about how this must all work, I guess, or wanting to understand, in a way that made sense for me, you know.	His death led her to question and attempt to find answers	Finding answers
50. I'm not saying that it's what everyone thinks or sees or whatever	Others may not agree with her	Personal choice
51. ... but it's something that I haven't, I certainly haven't let go of.	Her realizations have stayed with her	Personal choice
52. I like this, feels right for me, you know.	Her beliefs feel right for her.	Personal choice
53. And it doesn't matter if it's exactly the way it does turn out, but I don't think it's, it's not completely all wrong, either, you know.	Her realizations may not be totally correct, but they are not all wrong.	Finding answers
54. ... it probably comes about as a result of the fact that I place a huge, very high priority on family, like, extended family, and, like my family is just, I am totally connected to my family. The relationships are vitally important to me, and that doesn't mean I never have troubles with them, it just means that how interconnected to my family, there's a huge connectedness.	She values her family, is connected to them; they hold value for her sense of identity, "roots".	Connectedness

55. ... beyond the here and now, I feel like it extends in time, and there's a certain timelessness about it. Like, I don't need to know all these people personally to feel a connection to them as part of who I am.	Timelessness to the connections with others, whether we knew each other in this life or not	Connectedness
56. I think the core is probably a belief in some kind of creator being, in a way.	Belief in a creator as the core of her spirituality	Creator being
57. ... maybe your creator being is somehow really interwoven with your family, because there's certainly a creative aspect to family...	Creator is interwoven with family.	Creator being
58. Procreative aspect, or whatever, but that umm, it's kind of like, sort of sounds cliche but, I mean it comes right out of christianity where your body is God's temple and God lives in you. Or, you know, now in more new age stuff it's like, you are God and God is in you, you know, whatever it is, like, there's, I guess lot's of different ways to describe it but, this sense of connection has some aspect of a creator that runs through this fabric or, of your family, or this interweaving of different lives, you know.	'God' is a part of interpersonal connection	Connectedness
59.I think I was ready to question some more of those foundations, and to say, like, what really fits for me and what doesn't. And so I was ready to question some of those things, whereas before, I don't think that I was as ready	She was ready to question her religious teachings	Search for meaning
60. ... but the aspect of the importance of family, to me, was always there.	Constant importance of family	Family
61. ... death is an important part of life, very important, just as important as being born	Death is an important part of life.	Death
62. ... maybe at that moment [of death] they have the ability to see me in ways they never saw me before. And to know how important that is to me, better than they were ever able to know when we were limited by using our voice, ... or even limited by our physical structure, you know, for hugging, or whatever, maybe they could see, sort of, the depth of the, my soul more, maybe they can now.	At death, an ability to see beyond present physical constraints, a desire to be fully known and accepted.	Connectedness

63. I think that probably this plane where there's no time, I sometimes imagine that it just sort of exists, like, right here. They're probably right here listening to this, and going, well, you've kind of got it, D., but you know. You know, like, you'll laugh when you find out how it really is, kind of thing ...	Plane of timelessness exists concurrently with our timebound existence. Possibility that her ponderings are partly incorrect.	Life after death
64. Part of it was that my, sort of, personal foundation i.e. my marriage, which was family to me at the time was falling apart. And so the loss of that family, which I believed would be there forever, kind of shook me to my foundations, and made me sort of, or encouraged me to question things that I always believed	Loss of marriage refocused on loss of grandfather. Death of beloved person and death of marriage that was supposed to be permanent became mutual symbols of each other.	Search for meaning
65. Part of it was age, that I think I'd been away from home long enough.	Maturity necessary for spiritual change	Spiritual maturity
66. I'm not saying that I'm sorry I learned any of it, or that I should have never gone to church, because I think I'd have a sort of a foundation from which to question some of these things. If I didn't have any structure to work within,	Religion as a basis for spiritual questioning	Organized religion basis
67. ...but I needed some time away from it then to give myself permission and the opportunity to change perspectives	Needed permission, freedom to question	Questioning religion
68. It seemed more, like, a natural cycle of life.	Death is a natural part of life.	Acceptance
69. I knew, yes, I knew, I knew from when I was a kid that my Grandpa was older and that one day he would die before me, and so I had a certain expectation, although I didn't want it to happen, that one day I would have to deal with this, and had probably from a very young age, somewhat prepared myself for the fact that this would happen. Whereas with a relationship, and your marriage, you think it will last forever.	Death of Grandpa seemed natural, the end of her marriage, unnatural.	Acceptance

70. but it was my grandfather's death that was, this is a disgusting way of to describing it, but a vehicle, or opening the possibility to think about those things.	Grandfather's death opened up the possibility for spiritual growth; guilt at finding benefit in death of a Grandparent	Search for meaning
71. I suspect he found that his spirituality was somewhat different after death than what he had expected it to be, just as I'm sure it will be for me.	Spirituality may change after death	Finding answers
72.I think there's some aspect of that timelessness, or that aspect of all ending up in the same place...	We all end up in the same place	Life after death
73. ... is there any after life? Is this it for Grandpa? Like, is this just like, now he's dead, now he's dirt. You know? One day I will be, too, like, to put it really bluntly.	Questioned if there is life after death.	Life after death
74. I'm sure I have a need to believe that that's not all there is for Grandpa, because he was too nice of a person for that to be all there was	His life was too significant to simply be over	Search for meaning
75. ... there might be more coming, I don't know.	There may be more spiritual realizations	Openness to new learning
76. I still have these thoughts. I still have this impression, if you want to call it that, or this way I think about things now. Or, this way I've constructed to live within, because it fits for my soul, you know.	Firm beliefs, because they 'fit' for her	Personal choice
77. that was probably another gift that my grandfather gave to me 'cause we had such a close relationship that it forced me, not forced, but strongly encouraged me to question some things...	His death gave her the opportunity to question.	Search for meaning
78. He may have changed his mind somewhat since then. I think that his death, because of how close I felt to him, really encouraged me to think about some of these things, which is, I don't know, a pretty enormous gift to give your granddaughter, the opportunity to explore her own faith in your death.	Spirituality changes after death Opportunity to explore her faith in his death	Search for meaning
79. It was never a question. [whether or not she was going to try to make sense of the grief experience]	Had to question things when he died	Search for meaning

80. a) When someone who's been that, kind of like a cornerstone, like your foundation, when everything else is falling around you, and they die,you can't ignore it, because you don't have one remaining cornerstone of who you are, and so, you can't just ignore that it happened because, like your building is tipping over at this point. There's no other wall to lean against, and you know, the house is about to fall over, b) so it's like, let's figure out what's going on here and make something out of it. For me, I don't know, maybe other people could just ignore that, but I don't see how you can lose someone who is so integral to who you are and what you've known of yourself since you were wee little, and not deal with it somehow. Like, maybe people who are just sticking their head in the sands are actually dealing with it on another level, you know, 'cause I find it hard to believe that it's not going through at all, just might not be very conscious	Had nothing left when he died, and therefore, had to question things, and learn from it.	a) Personal disintegration b) Search for meaning
81.... in Grandpa's case I felt like I couldn't do that, he was too important to me to let him just slip by without figuring out what it all meant. That would have been grossly unfair not to learn what he had to teach me at the end. And not to give him credit for the things he did for me at the end of his life, when everybody else thought that I was for him, he was doing for me, and it would have been grossly unjust not to recognize what he'd done for me. so, I didn't have a choice about just ignoring it.	Her spiritual growth was in honor of him, of the gift he gave her	Search for meaning
82. and I didn't dwell on it and become obsessed by it.	she did not let it overcome her life.	Priorities
83. But I used to always say, Grandpa, I love you, and give him a hug and a kiss, and he had, I think, an incredibly hard time saying it back so he didn't. Not with words. ... and it didn't really matter to me because I know anyways. And just before he died, a couple of days before he died, when he could still sort of whisper, I said, Grandpa, I love you. And he was, like it was barely audible, and he said, I love you, too, and that is the first, I think, that I remember, time that I've ever, had ever heard him say that, and it was the last time he ever spoke to me, and that just, like, I knew I would remember that forever. Like, he didn't want to leave without, at least having said that, or, at least he knew it would be very important for me to hear that at some point. ... I guess it was all the more, sort or, meaningful because it was literally with the last of the energy he ever had in his life, that he ever said that to me.	He made a tremendous last effort to say "I love you"	Love
84.Holding his hand does [stand out in her mind]	Holding his hand was significant	Connectedness
85. Carrying his coffin to the grave, stands out for me.	Carrying his coffin was significant	Finality

86. And a million jokes in between the silliness, total silliness, teasing [stand out in her memory]. To me, to be teased is one of the, one of the ways I know people care about me.	Jokes, silliness as expressions of love.1	Love
87. To me it was [beautiful]. I mean, there's the time when I talk about him actually leaving, losing him, that I probably will cry to the end of my days about thinking about that because it really hurts, but no, he was a very big person in my life, helping me to become what I am, and to be proud of the things that are a part of me, both in terms of my heritage of my family, and also in terms of, sort of, the things that I made of myself, and the things that I've learned from him.	Grateful for his gift, self love.	Gift
88. I suspect that for everybody it's quite different, like in terms of this particular experience might be, but the way they interpret it, might be somewhat different.	Other's experiences may be different	Personal Choice

Appendix B: Interview Protocol, Edna

1. ...to find a church was difficult, and then to find a church we were comfortable with was hard	They wanted to find a church that was right for them	Personal choice
2. ...there's always been a spiritual basis or a religious basis, and I believe in that	Spiritual/ religious basis	Organized religious basis
3. ...I've always been sort of questioning what really happens when you die, 'cause you won't know until it happens	Questioned what happens after death	Search for meaning
4. So, we really fell away from the church just because we were so busy during that time. But our support from the church was incredible.	Fell away from church during son's sickness, due to lack of time, but church supported them.	Organized religious basis
5. And so the support there was fantastic and I often said, I don't know how parents, or people go through a grieving process, or a tragedy if they don't have some support network. And for us it was the church community, plus our community and my family.	Church and family support were irreplaceable	Connectedness
6. I don't know if I questioned my faith when my son was sick. I know that my big feeling was not to perform a miracle and make him better, because I've got enough medical background that I understood what was going on, and we both understood the severity of it. .. I guess my prayer was, most of the time, give me the strength to get through it.	Main prayer was for the courage to get through	Pain
7. I think my faith has changed in that, in some ways I'm a lot more tolerant of things. And then in some ways you become a lot less tolerant of things. You become a lot less tolerant of people's pettiness.	Increased tolerance as well as decreased tolerance of pettiness	Priorities
8. ...we just have to accept that in people, and in yourself. .. I think I'm a lot less questioning, actually, of my beliefs, and more accepting of what they are and realizing they'll change, you know, depending on what's thrown at you.	Less questioning of beliefs, more accepting of them and open to them changing in the future	Personal choice
9. but for me, I think it came from me saying to, or praying, or whatever, just give me the strength to get through it, and give me the strength to go from day to day, or from situation to situation, and getting out the other side.	Prayed for strength	Pain

10. When my son died, the support was there. We got through it as a family. We got through it. The kids got through it. And we got through it as a couple. And I think a lot of couples, when they lose a child, don't get through it, their marriage doesn't stay together.	Got through it as individuals, a family, and a couple	Connectedness
11. And knowing the church was always there.	The church's constant presence helped	Organized religious basis
12. And kids, kids make you question your faith.	Children made her question her faith	Questioning religion
13. ...and he said, if you look through the Bible there are little miracles all over the place and you just got to look at what you went through and find the little miracles. I mean, the fact that we were all there when he died was a miracle, in itself.	There are miracles in all tragedies	Found miracles
14. ... our youngest daughter is forever saying, he's out there. You know, mom he's not in the ground, he's out there, out there somewhere. And he is for me. I don't know where he is for the other kids, but for me he's out there somewhere	He's out there	Life after death
15. But it's been a long process but it's been a good process. ... I've had to look back on it and you have to draw the positive out of it. You can't draw all the negative out of it.	It's important to see the positive in difficult experiences	Gift
16. But for us we did what was best for us, what worked for us, and it's not going to work for everybody. But it worked for us.	Method of coping is personal	Personal choice
17. We just went to the doctors and said, we're closed, and we don't know how long for, but this is why we're closed.	Closed the family business down when her son was sick	Priorities
18. ...we were lucky in we had a lot of financial support, and that was more towards the end, but when we flew down to Toronto, my parents paid my husband's airfare, and mine was covered.	Financial support helped	Decreased stressors
19. The weekend after he died, we had planned beforehand that we were going to go to this movie with the kids, and he died, and we said, we're still going, you know. It's something we have to do, and it was even before the funeral. And it was, for us it was the right thing to do, you know. The kids had to know that life still goes on,	Affirmation of the ongoing life/lives of the rest of the family	Affirmation of life
20. ..., but for us we had to get through it still, as a family	Wanted to get through as a family	Connectedness

21. My husband and I were in touch with a psychologist, through the Cross Cancer, and we spent a lot of time with him over the next two years, which really helped, and we also got the kids in a program at the YWCA for children that have lost a significant other. So, to find a support group really helps, too, for everybody.	There is a need for support through grief, sense of and need for community.	Connectedness
22. For the kids, I think it was being able to ask anything they wanted, and hopefully that's helped their beliefs	The kids' being allowed to ask anything hopefully strengthened their beliefs; no secrets, nothing hidden or held back.	Search for meaning
23. .. for me, it was having all the support around, whether it was the religious support, the faith community, or whether it was family support, or whatever	Support was crucial for her	Support
24. ...and I think it's having the basis there already. I don't know how people go into it who have no religious basis, 'cause they, there's nothing to question.	Religious basis necessary	Organized religious basis
25. ... and you've got the basis to go on from and you've got something to look at, to try and find the answers and hopefully someone to go to, to help you find the answers. Whereas, if you've got no religious basis, who do you get angry at? Who do you question or that sort of thing?	Religion provides us with something to question, a place to go with questions and anger	Organized religious basis
26. ... nobody said life was going to be perfect, and nobody said life was going to be fair. And these things are going to happen and there's no point in worrying about them before they happen 'cause you can't solve them. So, hopefully you'll be able to do he best you can when they do happen.	Acceptance of pain in life	Acceptance
27. [In response to the question; did you come to those conclusions before or after?] For me, ... it hit home stronger during and after.	Beliefs strengthened by the grief experience	Finding answers
28. I've never been one to worry about it before hand, and I probably take after my dad in that sense. I just, for me, I just don't have the energy to do it. And so, when it confronts me, I'll deal with it, and I'll deal with it the best way I can. But, I'm not going to waste my time and energy worrying about it if it may never ever happen.	Don't worry about things before they happen	Priorities

29. ... my parents were very liberal in their thinking, in their religious thinking, and maybe that helps. I mean, maybe knowing that it didn't have to be cut and dried, and it didn't have to follow this, you know, this way of thought. Maybe that helped to be able to be more divergent in the way I think and a bit more accepting in the way I think.	Space to be unorthodox, to be divergent rather than have cut-and-dried answers about the meaning of life and death.	Personal choice
30. I don't think I ever thought, as I said, he wasn't sick for long, he was only sick for about 5 weeks, I don't think I ever thought, why us? I think I sometimes I may have thought, why him? But I don't think I ever thought, why us? Because why not us, I mean, we're no more special than anyone next door.	Never questioned "why us"	Acceptance
31. And my feeling is, we're created from a, for me, from God, and that's not everyone's, you know, they don't interpret the same way, but it doesn't mean that he's going to create everyone perfect.	God created people, but not perfectly	Creator being
32.I wasn't stuck in a rut that said, this is the way it has to be. I was lucky enough to be a bit more lateral thinking, than I think a lot of people are.	Open mindedness, helped get through	Personal choice
33. [In response to the question; your spiritual religious base was strengthened?] .	Spirituality strengthened by the tragedy	Gift
34.I think I'm much more at peace with dying in terms of there being somewhere out there, a place out there.	More at peace with death, more sure of life after death	Life after death
35. I'm you know, no one can guarantee anything. Your belief tells you what's there, but there's, other than what I believe in, there's nothing to say that my belief is the right belief. It's just what I've chosen for myself.	May be wrong, but it's what she's chosen for herself	Personal choice
36. ... good friends of ours, in February, were both killed in a car accident out of province. And, I'm sad that they're not here, but I'm not sad that they're gone, because I really believe that they are out there, whereas before I think if they had died before my son had died, I don't think my belief would have been that way, because I've never really been exposed to it.	Strength to cope with one grief can be transferred to other losses.	Helped with other losses
37. [In response to the question; so, how did you come to that? Believing that he's out there?] I think it's just a feeling.	Intuitive sense of the continuation of his life	Life after death

38.... it may be a need that I need to believe he's out there, and for me that's fine. If it's a need for me to believe he's out there, that's okay.	It is okay that beliefs may fill a need more than tell about truth	Comforting
39. ... it may have hit a bit when he actually died, because before he died his facial features had changed quite a bit, because he had brain tumours. So, his face had gotten fairly swollen, and one of his eyes was very, it protruded, stuck out quite a bit, and once he actually died, he was the son I knew six weeks prior to him getting sick. He looked like he did before.	Death gave her back the image of the child she had known. This helped lead her to believe in his subsequent life.	Life after death
40.... so I think kids are the real healer in something like that	Children are healers	Children
41. But, kids really help more than, I think more than actually even going to your church.	Children are healers	Children
42. Well, because everybody's got different beliefs within their belief and probably more so in the United Church, because it's become such an other world thinking church, whereas the children don't have, they've got the religious basis but they don t have all these preconceived ideas.	Children are more open-minded	Personal choice
43. [for the two hours after her son's death...] We held him. We bathed him. We dressed him. Probably more than anything, we held him. We took turns holding him. Yeah.	Allowed themselves to grieve in a shared process of touching, bathing him for the last time, holding him.	Finality
44. ... for the kids, I think it was good because they know, they knew they could be themselves, Nobody expected them to cry or sit in the corner. They were running around the church and having a good time. And for me that's healthy.	The children were permitted to act how they wanted and needed	Acceptance
45. I know for my husband, it's important to visit the cemetery, and the kids enjoy going to the cemetery. We've always gone to cemeteries, but for me it's not important, going, 'cause for me he's not there, you know. His body's there but he's not there, so it's not that important for me to go.	His body is at the cemetery, but he is not	Life after death
46. I think he feels the same way I do but I think he, I think maybe in order to communicate with him in some ways he has to go and be there and for him it's important. I think it's just a different way of grieving with it. It;s like he needed to write the handbook, and for me, I couldn't do that.	Acceptance of differing needs and processes (rituals) of grief.	Personal differences

47. And I think if you can accept that within each other, or within the kids, that everybody's different and there's no one right way, then it works.	Important to accept each other's individuality	Personal differences
48.I've had, like, a number of patients coming through that have happened to have cancer, and I can bring up the fact that we had a son that had cancer, and so we understand a bit of what they're going through.	Helping others	Helped with other losses
49. ... it's not as important to me to keep it to myself, it's more important for me to be able to share it with people and how they deal with it is their problem	Important for her to talk about it	Self care
50. I'm very positive about them [her spiritual changes]. I don't think any of my spiritual changes have been negative.	Spiritual changes are positive	Gift
51. But my biggest change has been in I'm a lot more comfortable in the fact that I feel they're out there, you know.	Most significant spiritual change is the conviction of life after death	Life after death
52. I've always been able to say that everybody grieves in a different way, and everybody believes in a different way, and there's no right way or wrong way. It's only what's right or wrong for me, as long as it's not hurting someone else.	Everyone grieves differently	Personal choice
53. I would hope that my kids maintain some sort of spirituality because if they ever, or whenever they go through something like this, whether it's with another sister or brother, or grandparents, because they've got their great grandparents alive and their grandparents, then they'd have a basis.	Having a spiritual basis helps with other losses	Spiritual basis
54. And they're still going to ask questions, and it's still going to be hard, but as I've said to our oldest daughter, you've gone through something that nobody, none of your friends have probably ever gone through, and so you've got something they don't have. ... hopefully, down the road, they'll be able to say there are positive things that came out of it for them, too.	Positive aspects of the grief experience	Gift

55. ... I said, I don't know if my husband felt the same way, I said, chemo's not an option for us because we've got 5 other kids at home, and I can't have this little guy that sick when it's not, it's not a cure. I mean, that's not what we were looking at.	When the chemotherapy would not save his life, she refused to have it used, since it would have made the child sick, put further strain on the surviving children ... choosing for less suffering	Acceptance
56. But, you know, but that, what we decided was fine, and I don't have regrets. I wouldn't go back another way and do it another way. But in the end that's what killed him, is the radiation. And that's okay, too, because he went really quickly.	The choice they made, for radiation, is what killed him. That is okay, because his demise was quick.	Euthanasia
57. ... we didn't stay at night. Our feeling was we needed time together as a couple and as a family, and he was asleep anyway, or that's what we were told, that he did well during the night. And the hospital staff knew that if he wasn't well at night, one of us would come in. But we needed the time away from there, and we needed the time as a family.	The whole of life was not bound up in the dying child	Priorities
58. ... my husband and I sat down and talked about it. I, there was never any question in my husband's mind that he was just going to close the business, and how we survived financially wasn't a concern because, I mean, we didn't have the cash to survive financially, but I know my parents had the cash to survive financially, and I also know that if we went to the church and said, or to friends and said, we need money, the money would have been there.	Refused to let finances set the agenda.	Priorities
59. You know, I've seen other couples going through it where the wife says, I don't want the husband along. And I, you know, in terms of going to doctors and things, and I said, but he needs to come along. He needs to know what's happening. He needs to be able to make the decisions with you.	The couple needs to go through it together	Connectedness
60. ... the sick child can't become the whole focus of your family, because then I think your family becomes really dysfunctional.	It is important to not let the sick child become everything	Priorities

61. The kids needed to know that life still goes on	Children needed to know that life still goes on	Affirmation of life
62. ... for us it [going to a movies as a family, after the death of their son] was a good time, 'cause we were, it was, we were a family, we were there	Good to have family time, even right after the death	Connectedness
63. ... but it was hard, you know. And things like that all along were hard, but you do it, and you learn to accept your kids as they are.	Learn through suffering, to accept their children	Acceptance of others
64. I mean, this is a, and it throws other people, but if the kids need to say that, then that's the other persona's problem, you know. If we're comfortable with it, with them doing it, then the other people have to deal with it in their own way.	Accepting their children's coping strategies, affirmation for them to be themselves, not to follow someone else's pattern	Personal choice
65. ... when we first found that he had tumours, and this was very early along, and we went to see the paediatrician and he showed us all the CAT scans and he showed us things, and our comment was, to him, we don't want heroics	They told the Doctor they did not want heroics	Acceptance
66. And in terms of my faith, I think his actual death was [a significant event].	His death affected her faith	Death
67. Very individual, and I think you've got to be accepting as that, you know, realizing that everybody's going to grieve differently.	Important to accept other's individuality	Personal differences
68. ... I mean, don't think you can do it all yourself, and, because you can't, you know,	Finding a sense of community, of not being in this alone.	Connectedness
69. It's a changing thing, changing thing. When we went to this funeral for this couple we knew, I said to her folks, because I knew her folks, ... I said, it will change. I said, I'm not saying it'll change for the better or for the worse, but your grieving will change.	Grieving is a changing thing	Finding answers
70. ... I expected to expect anything, so I was very open about it, and I don't know what my husband expected.	Learned to expect anything	Self acceptance

71. And that's okay. but I think things like that will always trigger things. So, I'll go through phases where it's not that evident in my life that I'm grieving, whereas I;ll go through other phases, where I'm probably grieving a lot more, or thinking about it a lot more than I have previously. and I know that's normal, so I don't expect a right or wrong or, you know, this isn't going the way I expect it, because for me anything goes.	Grief goes up and down, openness to whatever emerges	Acceptance
72. So, I think, hopefully the kids have learned that anything goes, everything's normal, it's just different for everybody.	Everything is normal	Personal differences
73. ... I was pregnant when our son got sick, so 6 months after he died we had another daughter. ... I think it was good she was a girl, not a boy. And she's been good for everybody.	The new baby was not a replacement though she was a source of comfort. Reaffirmation of how life goes on.	Healing

Appendix C: Interview Protocol, Timothy

1. ... it just devastated my life at the time. Shook me enough to start having to look for an answer about it.	Grief hurt him so much, he felt forced to find an answer	Search for meaning
2. Yeah, I, I see myself as being religious, okay, but ... the definition of what religion's all about changed, okay.	His definition of religious changed	Personal choice
3. Before, being religious, for me, meant that I was just following the commandments, being a good kid, and always being, kind of, feeling uptight with being good, kind of thing, just overly conscientious, okay.	Religion used to mean blind adherence to rules	Questioning religion
4. I lived in the mountains, so I enjoyed the mountain part of it, and then as a young kid I was a sea cadet and enjoyed the water part of it.	Nature is spiritual	Nature
5. So, these kinds of things were an important part of it and they still are, but the way I saw them began to change, and so now it's instead of sort of adhering religious, in the sense of following some, or being part of a religious set-up where you just do things that are normally classed as religious, now I see it as being more in touch with being human.	Spirituality is being truly human as opposed to adhering to rules	Personal choice
6. Just being, appreciating everything about life itself, and as that goes on, my ability to do that becomes better so that I can enjoy anything, whether it's good or bad or screwy, or whatever it is. And so that religious now means more of a fullness of being human, and seeing life as fully as I can, appreciating it in all it's ups and downs.	Religion is being fully human, appreciating life	Personal choice
7. ... so I can sit down and talk with someone like I'm doing now, and feel really nourished by it, and, or just meditating or going for a walk or something like this, 'cause they are all spiritual parts that nourish me.	Religion nourishes him	Self nourishment
8. The grief part of it comes in when, when something happens to challenge my view of life, in other words, my belief about life.	Grief causes a change in belief systems	Search for meaning
9.And, and it was just powerful enough to sort of call, hey, wake up. Wake up, wake up, and it was devastating.	Grief is very painful, forces awareness; WAKE UP, become aware	Pain
10. And so there was that part about it, and the thing about it, though, is that it, it was so, I was so tied into doing the right and wrong thing...	Old religious adherence to rules	Questioning religion

11. And so I was the scholar and he [his brother] was the regularly, and the glamour he got, and I sort of wished for it, you know. And so, although, all my high marks, the best in the province kind of thing, at one point, didn't do much to offset the kind of glamour that my brother was getting.	Some ambivalence about their relationship, feelings of envy	Self doubt
12. ... we never talked about death. It never occurred to me that he would die. It never occurred to me that such a thing could happen.	Never thought brother would die	Denial
13. And I got word of this when I was away at that time, and it just devastated, I just cried. I just cried.	Devastated by his brother's death	Pain
14. So, what I felt was just totally disconnected, or just as if whatever I had connections to the family, or to life, itself was cut off and so I was let loose, drifting around, and I still had one year to go to get my degree, so I came back out west and finished off it here.	The death left him feeling disconnected from life and others	Alienation, sense of drifting
15. ... I was searching for an answer that would explain what was going on, or give me some grounding or support or something. And in my searching, I, I looked to the priesthood,	He looked to religion in his search for answers	Search for meaning
16. I came across the story of Martin Luther at the time, and it, there was a phrase there that he used from Romans that was his reason for switching at the time, and it also provided me a reason for switching. It seemed to speak to me, or grounded me in the sense this is, yeah, this fits me. And so what happened was that search grounded me in a, that I switched from being a Catholic to being a United church person,or a protestant,...	Changed religious orientation	Personal choice
17. ... all in one year, that year I, the search was grounded in sort of becoming a minister and so I entered college at that point, and thought, hey, this is great. Okay, I had got kind of connected with the person of Jesus, and I was attracted to him and fascinated by it, and thought, hey, this is what I want to do. And so, the next three years I spent in college, and then I was ordained a minister, and sent back east and I thought this was great.	His search led him to the ministry	Search for meaning
18. ... what happened was that that kind of death resulted in a kind of a connecting of my own, kind of a conscious, conscious spirituality, I guess, in that sense.	Death led to connectedness, conscious spirituality	Connectedness
19. I just, I guess I was searching for something that would make sense to me. How do I make sense of this	Searching for understanding	Search for meaning

20. So it seemed as if there was something to do with easing a conscience that was feeling very guilty about something, so I don't know. So the phrase, the verse itself spoke to it's okay, you maybe, your good intentions were justified by, or what happened was justified by your good intentions, it didn't matter how it worked out kind of thing.	Guilt feelings for having been the one who survived	Guilt
21. I found the ministry to be a straight-jacket for me. Okay, I thought it would be a real freeing thing, but it wasn't, okay. so I felt I had to behave in certain, to sort of believe in certain things,...	Ministry was not an answer to spiritual need	Questioning religion
22. ... I think, that was silly, really, you know, not to be able to enjoy it, and yet it was part of my belief at the time. And other things like that kept coming up and I started, I liked it, but yet these things were coming up and I felt, I felt like challenging them.	Desire to challenge rules that seemed silly	Questioning religion
23. So, after 10 years in ministry I decided this was enough, okay. I'd married and we had 3 kids, and I was thinking, hey, this is stupid doing this. And I decided, at one point, to leave the ministry and go back into engineering, and it didn't work out, and then I decided, well, heck, I'm going to pack up here and go back into studies and see if I can't sort of get grasp of what's happening here.	Tried different careers, looking for the one that felt right. Searching outside the self for answers.	Search for meaning
24. ... and I spent 3 years down there, kind of searching, again, for a way of ministering that was, for me, a little more authentic than what I'd been used to.	Searching for an authentic personal expression of spirituality	Personal choice
25.. I was kind of feeling that I had to go along and be the servant kind of thing, so ministry was about being a servant, so I was kind of excelling at that, and the change was that, as I see it, kind of asserting myself as an individual	Realized he was acting as a servant, learning to be more assertive	Questioning religion
26. ... although it felt really strange to me to do it this way, you now, to sort of say, this is what I relate to that, so this is the way I want to go, and even if somebody disagreed with me, you know, to indicate this is who I am.	Asserting himself as a unique individual	Assertiveness
27. There was a little bit of a crisis there as I realized, hey, I had to do something	the realization of the need for change caused a crisis	Crisis
28. ... I started asserting myself, you know, in this different way, and it was almost a challenging the system, the church way of doing things, and I was getting into hot water.	Confrontation of external system outside self.	Questioning religion

29. ... but what happened was that I didn't nurture myself, okay. I was, I felt I was so spiritually minded that I was doing the right thing. And so I worked my butt off and just came to a point where I was exhausted, burnt out, punch drunk, and after a year and a half, I had to admit myself to the psych centre, to the psych ward at the hospital. And so something about my way of ministering, there was something wrong with it, okay.	Lack of self nurturing led to personal disintegration-doing for others what he could not do for himself.	Personal disintegration
30. ... it enabled me to switch from relying on the authorities to relying on myself.	Learned to rely on himself; move to inner work.	Self reliance
31. And what happened was that it enabled me to turn the corner instead of sort of heading deeper into the depression, to sort of turn around and sort of start working my way out.	The way to health was through the depression, which pushes inner engagement and begins the healing process.	Internal locus of control
32. I had to do in order to get out of this depression and sort of sort out what was going on. And part of it was that it introduced self care and the idea of the soul itself, so that what happened here is instead of relying on the spirit all the time, and sort of being way up here flying around doing things, I was sort of saying, hey, you've got to look after yourself and do the things necessary to keep your soul grounded, kind of thing.	Spirit as external, soul as grounded	Separation/ continuation of body and spirit
33. and so that was another kind of aspect of the, I call it the death and rebirth of another aspect of spirituality where one image had to go and be replaced by another image about what life was all about.	spiritual growth as death and rebirth of belief systems	Death and rebirth
34. ... so actually when I did realize it, it wasn't as painful because I'd already gone through the pain of it, and the death of it,, when I realized it, it was almost like, oh, God, you know, here, this is what I need to do	Realization occurred after the acute pain of the death of the belief system	Death and rebirth
35. ... sometimes I still regret the fact that I had to go through it, but that's another common aspect I have to still deal with it, you know, the regret part of it. ... it was a real juggling to sort of arrive at another kind of image, and this is what I had to do,and that.	Regret the waste of time, energy. New image as new direction.	Search for meaning
36. Yeah, yeah, I, there was a lot of times I just cried again, and I'd cry and I would not know why I was crying.	Uncontrollable crying	Personal disintegration

37. ... there was this bouts of crying again, and so it was, I guess the recognition that, look, if I was going to do anything that I would have to set time for myself and to appreciate who I was in my space in life.... or else,	He experienced a need for self acceptance	Self acceptance
38. And one day I felt this urge coming on me again, this kind of, this overwhelming feeling that was they're going to suck me down again, and so I went up this tunnel singing, you know. The only thing I remembered was 'Jesus Love Me', so I started singing	Using emotional catharsis to deal with episodes of pain	Catharsis
39. ... alright, I'm in trouble, let's get rid of this emotion, let's sing it out, you know, instead of letting it overwhelm me. And it worked...	Emotional catharsis instead of being overwhelmed	Catharsis
40. ... and I laugh about it now but it was a life saver at the time. But it was the same kind of, sort of, doing something with, or saying things differently to happen to respond differently.	Learning new ways of coping	Helped with other losses
41. ... the spirituality of it all was just knowing how to handle that part of it, and sort of utilizing whatever was available at the time. ... and it was like convalescing, a convalescent experience.	Spirituality includes learning new ways to cope and take care of oneself	Self care
42. ... and I was totally just unable to perform any functions of being a minister, and when I started getting better and sort of, one of the things was to ask the chaplain, hey, I wouldn't mind volunteering to take the chapel services on a Sunday morning, which was, oh, maybe about an hours worth, okay. ... it was the beginning again of a return to ministry, and I was very tentative and very weak and very scared.	Slowly returned to the ministry, trying out abilities in a safe place.	Organized religious basis
43. I can do my thing my way,... and one of the first things I did was got back in touch with a social worker and said, hey, how about you and I teaming up to start a getting out from depression group.	Using his experience to help others	Helped with other losses
44. And I was able to do things in a very way that wasn't sort of hamstrung by a lot of rules and regulations, because we felt freer to do it then.	Staying outside of rigid systems.	Personal choice
45. [In response to the question; and that's a big part of your spirituality, is that what I hear, taking care of yourself and nourishing yourself in that way?] Yeah. Yeah, and so I made sure that that's what was happening. I didn't do as well as I could.	Self care as a significant aspect of his spirituality	Self care

46. I started, not only nourishing myself spiritually, but started recovering a lot of things that I had either killed off before, or not recognized before. They were sitting there waiting to be recognized.	Self nourishment and awareness, reclaiming lost aspects of the self.	Finding answers
47. ... asked me how I saw my experience, and I said, well, it's like a shattered mirror, and she picked up on that and said, great, because that's a good way to look at it. ... now I see each piece of the mirror as a different part of my personality.	Personal disintegration facilitates self knowledge	Finding answers
48. ... I could see each one of the Goddesses as being represented by the shattered mirror. So, instead of having one holy God, that was just, you know, one indivisible and sort of, now I could see myself as being all the images of the God and Goddesses that were part of it. And so I became a very, instead of monotheism, I moved into polytheism where,you know, I could see all these goddesses in Greek mythology, and I really enjoyed that	Shattered self reflected in polytheism	Feminine side of God
49. ... but what happened also is that each one of these became part of me, so that there was a birthing of each one of these figures in me, so the spirituality not only nourished me as I was, but also served to birth the other parts of me that were there.	Polytheism - Gods became part of self, as new parts were born	Death/rebirth
50. I said, yeah, I, I, I love you, kind of thing, and, and feel very close to you and I allowed myself to say something that had been a kind of a no-no. ... there was a sense of appreciation for each other in that sense, the closeness we had.	Breaking social convention to facilitate interpersonal connections	Love
51. And I was really grateful for her for being able to pick up on it and alow me the freedom to say that, and to acknowledge that, and so, in a sense, by doing that, it enabled me to honour the feminine part of me kind of thing, and incorporate her as being part of me. ... that was a really crucial part of the spiritual development for me to be able to do that. But it needed her and several others to be able to acknowledge that I could say that and they could accept it.	Honor the feminine, connectedness with women	Feminine side of self
52. ... the aggression, okay, the anger part in me which probably was all right, although I could get angry, but when I became a minister it was frowned on. And I thought that it was, you know, I was a minister, ...	Not able to express anger as a minister	Questioning religion
53. And so I went to an Aries weekend and discovered that my fear was not with another person's aggression coming towards me, it was that my fear was my own aggression and what I would do with it if I let it out.	The need to connect with own aggression, fear of loss of control as move toward violence	Finding answers

54. ... what it did was give me a sense of my own energy, my own, a kind of Aries energy again.	Connected with his anger, with a God-like part of himself	Self knowledge
55. ... and yet something about that aggressive energy was lost when I entered ministry, and sort of was content to be the polite guy.	The ministry stifled the aggressive part of himself	Loss of self
56. ... when I had gone into that depression, it sort of pulled out of it was kind of the shattering of the mirror, and the grief part of it was right there. ... I guess the parts of cutting off the passion was also a grief experience. Cutting off the anger part is a grief experience.	Experiencing grief for lost parts of himself	Grief broadened
57. ... in imaging there was a young [boy who] showed up from the shadows, and he was about 10, and he looked kind of weak and pale from sitting in the shadows all the time, but he came out. .. I was there, and this was me at age 10, and I allowed him a second or so on that, and then I allowed him to come forward and as he came forward we hugged. So, it was a kind of a reuniting again of somebody that had been split off, you know, years and years ago. And that part of me, that told me you can't do that, you can't say that, you're not allowed to feel that or something like this,or express anything like this, it started off way back then.	He connected with his weak child within himself	Finding answers
58. And we had a tremendous time and I had a real good time being a person with each one of these other people, persons that were there.	Connecting with others as persons	Connectedness
59. Women have been missing. So, it was really a delightful experience for me to be a part of this player, playing with the feminine and being, being a part of it that was pleasure, enjoyable and being very cautious about not kind of promoting a male macho kind of thing.	Honoring women	Feminine side of self
60. And so that's another part of me that came to life at that part, that I could do that and enjoy it and it was fun.	Birth of another part of self	Self growth
61. I guess the grief part of it be that, you know, that it took so long before I could have that kind of enjoyable experience,...	Grief for wasted time	Wasted time
62. ...that part had been really tremendous, okay, that part, I mean, it just, it was a painful way to do it, and it was a hellish way for the family to have to go through, you know, so now I'm sort of having to deal with the repercussions, or the fringe effects of the three boys having to try to be with them in a way that I wasn't able to before.	Concern for his family	Grief transferred

63. ... the pain that I went through was also horrendous and they [his sons] also experienced part of this, so I have to, hopefully they'll be able to see it as a benefit for themselves, too.	The pain was positive in some ways for him; hope that his sons may also benefit from his crisis	Gift
64. The other parts are really tremendous and the part that, like, in saying good-bye for example, it took me over 30 years to finally say good-bye to my brother. Like, I wasn't able to at that time, and so finally when I was doing some clinical work at the hospital, in the program that I'm just finishing now, one of the things we did, I felt, what I wanted to do was finally say good-bye. And so we went through a ritual of ... acting, and grave ... kind of thing, saying good-bye.	Acceptance of death and giving up denial of the loss, pain, sense of being out of control, alienation from family and from life.	Acceptance
65. ... something about that also fit my situation, because I wonder how much of that was true, as I'd lived, the last 40 years, that the wrong one had died.	Had wondered if he should have died instead of his brother; guilt at being the survivor	Self doubt
66. ... I just realize that I have to deal with that still, so that's another part that's sort of the on-going nature of what's happening.	Spiritual growth is ongoing	Ongoing process
67. ... what was there that I was feeling guilty about? ... that somehow or other I was spared and my brother wasn't and that I had done my best to do what I could for him but I wasn't aware enough of, or even competent enough, or nobody could have been to have caused his death.	Recognition of his guilt about not preventing brother's death, and of its being a false guilt	Guilt
68. ... if he hadn't died, I'd have been stuck in my old style of spirituality 'cause I wouldn't have been shook loose from it. That's almost like saying that because he died, I was able to live, and it's, that maybe it did, that I should think that, you know, without feeling guilty about.	Acceptance of the pain of his brother's death became a resource for living	Found miracles

Appendix D: Interview Protocol, Sarah

1. I think the last question seemed, to me, to be the first question. Something about, are you a religious person. And I would say I am a spiritual person. I'm not sure I'm a religious person.	Religion is different from spirituality She sees herself as spiritual, but not religious	Organized religion versus spirituality
2.I associate religion with belonging to some organized religion and believing all the doctrine of that organized religion.	Religion involves an organized set of beliefs	Questioning religion
3. I took a philosophy class with a very strong atheist, and he took my beliefs and just shredded them.	She was strongly religious, until her beliefs were challenged	Questioning religion
4. I got very disillusioned by the hierarchy and I experienced a situation of incredible betrayal, by the pastor in a counselling situation, and no support whatsoever from the church hierarchy or the board, or anyone else in dealing with that situation. So, now I'm not connected to any particular religion, so that's why I wouldn't say I'm religious.	Disillusioned and disappointed by the church	Questioning religion
5. I'm still spiritual and still seeking, exploring my spirituality through taking further religious education and through organizing my own kinds of religious ceremonies, I guess, if you want, spiritual worship,	Though she is not religious, she is spiritually active	Personal choice
6. ... it is really important to me to worship in community. And so I'm not content to just pursue my spirituality on my own. Go for a walk in the woods or whatever, I need community. I need people to share that with and discuss with them.	She needs to worship with others	Personal choice

7. ... actually it was my father's death that made me decide to pursue further religious education. It was being with him as he was dying, being at his bedside, and reassuring him, trying to reassure him, trying to encourage him to stop breathing, basically to just let go, because he was in his 80's and had Alzheimer's, and his quality of life had deteriorated, we had had to admit him to a nursing home, ... and he was profoundly unhappy, and had basically stopped eating. And so I tried to encourage him to just let go, stop breathing, call it a day. It was a good life. ... I tried to tell him stories about his life, what he had done, what he had accomplished and how valuable it had been, and what a good man he was, and tried to just encourage him to let go.	Her father's death instigated her educational search into spirituality. Being with him when he died led to this.	Pain
8. I've been looking at integrating body, mind, more body/ soul/ spirit stuff, I've been thinking, though, around his death, and the death of other people close to me, how looking at his body later, like in the casket before the funeral, how it seemed as though he wasn't there, just his body was there, how he had gone somewhere else.	The sense that her father was no longer in his body, continuation somewhere else of personal essence, identity	Separation/ continuation of body and spirit
9. ... how we tend to separate our bodies and our spirituality somehow, and not integrate them, I'm sort of struggling with that. Like, how come we end up seeing the body as some kind of shell that we discard on death, that it's not part of who we are, and important in that way. And I don't know, and yet I do know, for me, there was that sense, seeing him later, that he had gone.	Desire for body-spirit integration along side a sense of split.	Separation/ continuation of body and spirit
10. I wanted to take him home with me, whatever, you know, just, I couldn't leave him. But then later it did seem like, like he'd moved on.	At first his body seemed like him, then it seemed an empty shell	Separation/ continuation of body and spirit
11. ... within a few days, that seemed like he had, sort of, left his body. ... I'm wondering about that, if that's just some kind of comforting illusion that we hold that makes it easier to put somebody into the ground or whatever, if we think, oh, well, they're not really there anyway.	Perhaps the belief in life after death is just to comfort the survivors	Separation/ continuation of body and spirit
12. So, I guess there is a part of me that feels like he is there, or I wouldn't go stand there and sing to him.	He's still at the cemetery	Life after death
13. I guess I feel he's partly there. I'd like to, I'd like to think he's sort of around and part of everything. And I sometimes have a sense of that. It's, you know, I see things or people that remind me of him, my youngest nephew particularly.	Continuation of his being in other aspects of life	Life after death

14. ... and was just very healing for us all during that period, to have this little baby to hold on to and hug and cuddle and even for my dad, when he was in the hospital, it was just really calming for him.	It was healing to have a baby to hold, perhaps as a symbol of hope and ongoing life.	Children
15. So, I see my nephew as kind of being a piece of my dad somehow, this last grandson.	She sees her nephew as being a piece of her Dad; the soul lives on in others	Life after death
16. ... I sort of do believe people continue to exist in some form. I had a friend, a very close friend who died, 20 years ago, I suppose, who did return to visit me after her death. ... I've kind of hoped my dad would, but I can't say that he has, so. She didn't return in a physical form, but just in a, lying in bed one night, opening my eyes and just feeling her presence so strongly in the room.	A dead friend came to visit her	Life after death
17. ... she was there saying it's okay, you know, there's something else, so I kind of hold to that, a sense that there is something else.	There is another dimension of existence	Life after death
18. And I don't expect to ever see dad again. I can see where, in some way, I might be joined to him somehow, I mean, but not in a physical sense. I don't expect to die and go to heaven, and there he is waiting for me.	May be connected emotionally, or spiritually, with her father again, but outside of time and space.	Connectedness
19. ... we also live on, I suppose, you know, in all the little inherited ways, characteristics, or genetic kinds of things. ... I'm so-so about reincarnation, now, I mean, I did explore it, and I still have some kind of, some pretty strong feelings about it, but I wouldn't say for sure that I believe, because it's a bit of a logistics problem... but it's interesting to see all kinds of my aunts mannerisms in my daughter.	We live on genetically	Life after death
20. [In response to the question; ... your dad sometimes is in or with your nephew?] Maybe. Yeah.	Her Dad is sometimes in her nephew	Life after death
21. I think more just a sensing, or a presence, or a linking up in some kind or way. ... if somehow, almost like a melting into each other, I don't know, I don't know.	Connecting with her father somehow	Connectedness
22. ... just that sensing of connection. Yeah. That it would just be that and knowing the other was there	Intuitive sense of connection	Connectedness

23. And yet, as I say that, and think about that, I think, well, what if I'd hated my father. What if he was abusive and, would I want to be joined to him forever and ever, you know. So, then I think, oh, well, that's probably silly, it probably doesn't happen ... So, I'm not sure.	Still undecided about inter-connectedness after death, wondering how much of her experience is imagination or reality.	Search for meaning
24. I'm sort of exploring the idea of God the father, and my father as God, in it, because I grew up, very much, with a male god, as most of us did then. He this and He that, and God the father, and that was quite comfortable for me because my father was very loving and kind and quite spiritual in his own way, very giving, very caring, couldn't do enough for people. ... as I got back into going to church, in more recent times, I discovered that people were describing God in many other ways, not necessarily as God the father, and becoming a little more aware of how uncomfortable it is for people who have been abused to think of God as a father figure, a little more sensitized to that. Then I've started to try to re-think my image of God,	Exploring the concept of God - God as male? God as a father figure? God in other images? God as something she can image - and therefore can control?	Questioning religion
25. ... and one of the things that happened with my father's death is that I've started to see my mother in new ways. ... And now, with him out of the picture, mom and I have become quite close, and I've come to appreciate her in new ways.	Death of one parent makes the other parent visible	Found other relationship
26. So, I'm starting to, as I start to know her, and value her, and I suppose start to value my own likenesses to her, the ways that we connect, the similarities I do have to her, then that starts to shape a different view for me of God. If god is in me and if I am created in Gods image, then I'm also, there's also the feminine side to that, view of God.	Came to a new view of God which included the feminine	Feminine side of God
27. ... as I get some distance and objectivity about dad, as I write about him, and things like that, then I'm also exploring the less desirable characteristics, you know, seeing that he wasn't perfect and that he was quite controlling in many ways, and you know, all of those kinds of issues, so I suppose in some ways that makes him less God-like, too, as I think about his flaws as well.	As she realizes his flaws, he becomes less God-like	Finding answers
28. I certainly have done a lot of "oh, if only this or that', if we hadn't put him in the nursing home, or if we'd, you know, if we'd, all that kind of thing. If only I'd, even as he was dying, I sort of wished that I'd had the presence of mind to draw my mother in more.	Grief with guilt around the "only if's"	Guilt

29. But at one point, I was complaining to one of the nurses that I couldn't get him to eat any of his lunch, like we were trying to feed him, we didn't want tubes or any of that kind of thing. ... And she said,... why do you want him to eat? You now, sort of look at him, the state he's in, his quality of life. Why are you trying to make him eat? ... So, it stunned me, but I could also see, yes, why would we want him to live when he is so unhappy?	The nurse's comment helped her accept her Dad's inevitable death, to notice what he wanted over clinging to his life.	Acceptance
30. At one point when he was fairly lucid, I kind of, I said, kind of half jokingly, but that's, it was, with dad, you discuss serious things in sort of a joking way, kind of said, so what are your plans for your old age, or something like that. And he said, I want to go outside and freeze, so, you know, he was not happy with what was happening to himself. And so, I think he was choosing death at that point.	He had wanted to die	The choice to die
31. ... trying to respect that, and yet at the same time, you just went on breathing, when there was really nothing else left. I had thought, at one point, he was on some medication to try to control his restlessness, and because of the Alzheimer's, and one of the reasons we put him in a nursing home, was that he was getting very difficult for my mom to handle, because he would get just enraged about something, which was very uncharacteristic for him, for his personality. But, and at one point I, when I was visiting, I mean, I was almost tempted to give him his whole bottle of pills,you know, just that, 'cause there was nothing left for him, and it was so hard to see him, to see him like that.	She thought of helping him die, because of his suffering	Euthanasia
32. ... I suppose telling him not to breathe was sort of the same thing, saying there's nothing, nothing to live for now.	Encouraging him to die was another form of euthanasia	Euthanasia
33. I think it [her telling him to let go] was a permission. I felt afterwards as though I'd lied to him because I tried to tell him that we'd be okay, 'cause he always worried about us, and tried to look after us, and so when I was giving him permission to die, I was trying to say it was alright. We'd be all right, and that he'd given us so much. But afterwards, afterwards I felt like I hadn't, that wasn't true. It is now, most of the time.	Although she told him they'd be fine, at first she wasn't	Pain
34. I think the experience of being with someone when they're dying, was really quite profound and changed me	After walking with a dying person, life looks different.	Life- changing

35. And I guess dealing with the loss of a parent, too, it sort of makes you older, or makes you feel older.	Parents death faces one with one's own death, life is seen as fragile.	Acceptance
36. ... certainly made me more aware of my Mom's mortality, too,	More aware of Mom's mortality	Acceptance
37. ... and that's I think, partly what's intensified our relationship and made it different is that I have a real sense of not knowing how much more time I have with her.	Relationship with her Mom was intensified	Found other relationship
38. When I'm home visiting, there's been times when I've, you know, the night before I've left, I've gone in and sat on the end of her bed and said,so what more do we still have to say to each other. What are you going to wish you'd told me tomorrow when I'm gone, or, you know, that kind of, and she's been okay with that. She's able to relate that way. I mean, we don't say, well, what if you die before I see you again, I mean, we don't say that, but I think she had a sense of that, too.	Her father's death changed the way she is with her Mom.	Connectedness
39. I think it's [the changes in herself] been good,	Happy with the changes she experienced	Gift
40. I think I have more empathy, as well, with people, when they do lose someone.	More empathy with others	Helped with other losses
41. And I think it's changed my writing, to some degree.	Her life's work was changed	Life changing
42. I think of it as gradual	Gradual changes	Life changing
43. ... just feeling completely different. Just feeling really changed.	His actual death completely changed her	Life changing
44. I came back and carried on editing this and that, and you know, these projects were due and it seemed to important, and in retrospect, nothing was as important as being there with him.	Set different priorities	Priorities
45. And even when he died, I had been with him the afternoon before and all night, and all that day, and I'd finally gone to my mom's to get some sleep and I was going to go back that night, but I slept for about an hour and then just woke up, got up, and went to the hospital. And so I, again, just had a sense that I would be with him.	A need to be present during the dying, the closure of his life.	Closure

46. ... publishing the book didn't change my life. Having my father die changed my life. And the book just seemed like nothing in comparison to his life and death. That just seemed so much more important than the book. It was kind of interesting, after sort of holding that up all my life as what mattered.	Her life's ambition was put into perspective by her father's death	Life changing
47. ... I wish I lived out of that perspective more than I do. It's really easy to get caught up again into thinking, oh, I have to get this project done, and I have to be at this meeting, and you know, even if my daughter has soccer tonight, or even if my husband hasn't had an evening with me for weeks, you know, it's real easy to still get caught up in that, making those things what's important.	Difficult to always live by the new priorities	Priorities
48. Just the keeping life in balance, keeping your priorities straight, that sort of thing. In some ways it's taken a pressure off me, in terms of writing, that I don't have to write and publish all kinds of great works,	Priorities have taken work pressure off	Priorities
49. ... , that that's not necessarily what will validate my life or make my life, give my life meaning.	Important to have meaning in life	Search for meaning
50. I guess living, just the living of it, you know, the caring for people, the doing what I do.	She has more to offer than literary work - loving relationships are gifts that count.	Love
51. I still do tend to think of life in terms of the 'things to do' list, the accomplishments, instead of just giving myself credit for having been here for my sister and my niece, and you know, whatever else, what's happening in my life.	Difficult to keep priorities straight	Priorities
52. It's a constant battle.	Constant battle to keep perspective	Difficult
53. ... through the writing. Writing is, and always has been, my way of dealing with anything and everything. And it's the way I distance myself, I suppose, or move it. I get different perspective, objectivity, I suppose.	Writing gives her perspective and healing	Objectivity
54. I think the writing is still important, and I need to do more of the writing. I think it's maybe the publishing that's become less important.	Writing more important than publishing	Priorities

55. ... there's sort of two separate activities, one depending on some sort of outside recognition and approval, and all of that, and the other being more for me.	More important to do for the self than for outside approval; sorting the inner and outer values.	Self acceptance
56. ... my ideas around spirituality have been broadening since the grief experience, but I'm not necessarily, I wouldn't necessarily attribute that to the grief experience, but just more to the courses I've been taking and the things that I've been exposed to. But I would say definitely that it's becoming broader, more fluid, or whatever, less circumscribed than it was before.	Spirituality broadened, became more flexible through learning	Personal choice
57. [In response to the question would you say that the experience affected your spirituality? The actual experience, the grief experience] I would say yes.	Grief did affect her spirituality	Spiritual change
58. I'm trying to figure out a way to say why. But, I don't know, something,just something about being there at that moment of death, somehow, still seems to have been quite critical. I guess it just feels like a really profound spiritual experience.	Being present at his death was spiritual	Death
59. I suppose as was giving birth to my daughter, in a way, although I think I was much more in touch with it as a spiritual experience during my father's death than I was giving birth to my daughter. ... I guess where they're similar and why I would describe them as profoundly spiritual experiences is because I see them both as being extremely life changing. Nothing can be the same again, in both cases, and so I think that's what it is with my father. I mean, I've grown and changed and I'm okay now and all of that, but nothing is the same, you know, nothing will ever be the same.	Death as a birthing process. Loss is partly the inability to return to what used to be.	Life changing
60. I guess it does really force you to be the adult and to take responsibility. There's no one to kind of fall back on, all those kinds of things. My dad was very much always there, both emotionally and financially.	The death of a parent forces awareness of being truly an adult, truly responsible for oneself, without a buffer.	Acceptance
61. And yet it almost seemed like I couldn't be otherwise. But as I think about that, now, that in a sense that's another way, I suppose, of feeling him living on, or revisiting or something like that when I find him in myself. Yeah. Yeah, I would say, by and large, it is [comforting to find him in myself].	Finding herself acting like him, giving her niece money; agonizing over it, but doing it anyway.	Life after death

Appendix E: Five Main Themes

Main theme	Sub-themes	Protocol Items
1. Mystery	a. love b. search for meaning c. life changing d.separation/ continuation of body and spirit e. life after death f. creator being g. death	Doreen a. 16,29,40,83,86 b. 22,59,64,70,74,77,78, 79,80b,81 c. -- d. 39 e. 42,47,63,72,73 f. 56,57 g. 21,61 Edna a. -- b. 3,22 c. -- d. -- e. 14,34,37,39,45,51 f. 31 g. 66 Timothy a. 50 b. 1,8,15,17,19,23,35 c. -- d. 32 e. -- f. -- g. -- Sarah a. 50 b. 23,49 c. 34,41,42,43,46,59 d. 8,9,10,11 e. 12,13,15,16,17,19, 20,61 f. -- g. 58

2. Grief as an Opportunity, Gift	a. Finding Answers b. Found Miracles, Other Relationships c. Death/Rebirth d. Connectedness e. Helped With Other Losses f. Gift g. Personal Differences	Doreen a. 26,31,32,49,53,71 b. -- c. -- d. 15,33,36,37,43,44,45, 54,55,58,62,84 e. -- f. 25,27,34,87 g. -- Edna a. 27,69 b. 13 c. -- d. 5,10,20,21,59,62,68 e. 36,48 f. 15,33,50,54 g. 46,47,67,72 Timothy a. 46,47,53,57 b. 68 c. 33,34,49 d. 18,58 e. 40,43 f. 63 g. -- Sarah a. 27 b. 25,37 c. -- d. 18,21,22,38 e. 40 f. 39 g. --

3. Grief as a Personal Test	a. Self Doubt b. Euthanasia c. Personal Disintegration d. Pain e. Acceptance f. Guilt	Doreen a. -- b. -- c. 14,80a d. 24,38 e. 18,19,68,69 f. -- Edna a. -- b. 56 c. -- d. 6,9 e. 26,30,44,55,65,71 f. -- Timothy a. 11,65 b. -- c. 29,36 d. 9,13 e. 64 f. 20,67 Sarah a. -- b. 31,32 c. -- d. 7,33 e. 29,35,36,60 f. 28
4. Religion Versus Spirituality	a. Personal Choice b. Organized Religion Versus Spirituality c. Organized Religious Basis d. Questioning Religion	Doreen a. 9,11,12,50,51,52,76, 88 b. 48 c. 3,66 d. 4,5,6,7,8,10,13,67 Edna a.1,8,16,29,32,35,42,52,64 b. -- c. 2,4,11,24,25 d. 12 Timothy a. 2,5,6,16,24,44 b. -- c. 42 d. 3,10,21,22,25,28,52 Sarah a. 5,6,56 b. 1 c. -- d. 2,3,4,24
5. The Feminine	a. Feminine Side of God b. Feminine Side of Self	Timothy a. 48 b. 51,59 Sarah a. 26 b. --

Appendix F: Sample Interview Questions

- Tell me about your personal spirituality (before & after the grief experience).
- Would you say then that the experience affected your spirituality?

* Tell me about your grief experience(s).

- What is your understanding of how the change came about?
- Was the Change gradual or sudden? Does any event stand out in your mind?
- Did this experience have long term effects?
- How do you feel now about the change in yourself?
- Are you a religious person?

Appendix G: Study Description

My name is Casey Chaulk and I am a master's student in the counselling program of the Educational Psychology Department at the University of Alberta. I am presently working on my thesis, which looks at the phenomenological experience of grieving and spirituality.

Through your participation in two interviews with me, I hope to gain insight into this phenomenon. My interest in this topic has grown as I have read more and more about the two topics of spirituality and grieving. Through my work as a therapist, and through my own life experience, I have begun to question if, when, and how, grieving may affect spirituality.

When we meet for the first interview, I would like you, in your own words, to tell me about your personal experiences of grieving and spirituality. I want to hear about your experiences as they actually happened for you. Don't worry about trying to make your story interesting or trying to put in into any particular order; just tell it the way you remember it. I am particularly interested in whether and how grief has played a role in your spirituality.

There is no right or wrong way of telling your story; just tell it as it comes to mind. I am more interested in your actual experiences than I am in your opinions or analyses of them. I would like you to concentrate on HOW you experienced the grief/spiritual moments in your life. It would also be helpful if, between now and the interview time, you reflect upon your experience and write down any recollections that come to mind. This interview will be approximately one hour in duration.

During our second interview, I will ask for your feedback on my interpretations of your experience.

I would like to remind you that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that you may opt out at any time. All information will be kept strictly confidential. If you decide that you no longer want to participate in the study, all information about you will be destroyed.

If you have any questions, at any time, please feel free to phone me at:

Appendix H: Consent Form

I, ____, agree to participate in the study of spirituality and grieving. Through the use of an interview format, I will be asked to describe my experiences in as much detail as possible. This study is being conducted by Casey Chaulk, as part of her Master's thesis on this topic. Her supervisor is Dr. William Hague, of the educational psychology department of the University of Alberta.

I understand that my interview of approximately one hour will be recorded on audio-tape, and that, in order to guarantee confidentiality, the tapes will be erased when the project has been completed. My name, and that of any other persons I mention, will not be revealed at any time, nor will any information which may identify us. In the transcription of the interview, the researcher will use pseudonyms for my name and for any other names I mention. Also, the researcher will be the sole individual with access to the tape recordings and interview transcripts, and these will be stored in a secure place.

I am aware that I may terminate my involvement in the study at any time without prejudice. I am also aware that if discussion of my experiences raises any concerns for me which I wish to discuss further with a counsellor, Casey Chaulk will suggest individuals I might contact.

Signature:__________________________________

Date: __________________________________